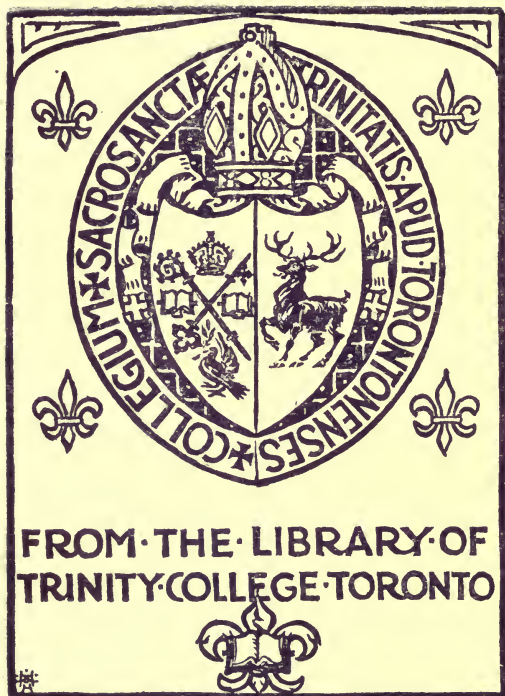


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W. Bernard Cheney



THE SUPREMACY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

FOUR LECTURES

COMPOSED FOR DELIVERY

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN LENT AND EASTER TERMS 1847,

AT THE

LECTURE FOUNDED BY THE REV. JOHN BAMPTON, M.A.

CANON OF SALISBURY.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED,

TWO SERMONS

ON THE

INFLUENCES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,

PREACHED

BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY ON WHITSUNDAY,

1845.

BY THE LATE

WALTER AUGUSTUS SHIRLEY, D.D.

BISHOP OF SODOR AND MAN.

OXFORD:

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MAY 8 1985

EXTRACT
FROM
THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT
OF THE
REV. JOHN BAMPTON,
CANON OF SALISBURY.

— “ I give and bequeath my Lands and Estates to the
“ Chancellor, Masters, and Scholars of the University of
“ Oxford for ever, to have and to hold all and singular the
“ said Lands or Estates upon trust, and to the intents and
“ purposes hereinafter mentioned ; that is to say, I will and
“ appoint that the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford
“ for the time being shall take and receive all the rents, issues,
“ and profits thereof, and (after all taxes, reparations, and ne-
“ cessary deductions made) that he pay all the remainder to
“ the endowment of eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, to be
“ established for ever in the said University, and to be per-
“ formed in the manner following :—

“ I direct and appoint, that, upon the first Tuesday in
“ Easter Term, a Lecturer be yearly chosen by the Heads of
“ Colleges only, and by no others, in the room adjoining to
“ the Printing-House, between the hours of ten in the morning
“ and two in the afternoon, to preach eight Divinity Lecture
“ Sermons, the year following, at St. Mary’s in Oxford,
“ between the commencement of the last month in Lent Term,
“ and the end of the third week in Act Term.

“ Also I direct and appoint that the eight Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be preached upon either of the following Subjects—to confirm and establish the Christian Faith, and to confute all heretics and schismatics—upon the divine authority of the holy Scriptures—upon the authority of the writings of the primitive Fathers, as to the faith and practice of the primitive Church—upon the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—upon the Divinity of the Holy Ghost—upon the Articles of the Christian Faith, as comprehended in the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds.

“ Also I direct, that thirty copies of the eight Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be always printed, within two months after they are preached, and one copy shall be given to the Chancellor of the University, and one copy to the Head of every College, and one copy to the Mayor of the city of Oxford, and one copy to be put into the Bodleian Library; and the expense of printing them shall be paid out of the revenue of the Land or Estates given for establishing the Divinity Lecture Sermons; and the Preacher shall not be paid, nor be entitled to the revenue, before they are printed.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that no person shall be qualified to preach the Divinity Lecture Sermons, unless he hath taken the degree of Master of Arts at least, in one of the two Universities of Oxford or Cambridge; and that the same person shall never preach the Divinity Lecture Sermons twice.”

P R E F A C E.

It is probably in the recollection of most of those into whose hands the following pages will fall, that the late Bishop of Sodor and Man, in consequence of his appointment to the Bampton Lectureship for this year, had commenced the course in the last Lent Term, and had delivered only two Lectures when he was seized by the illness which terminated fatally in the following April.

Under these circumstances it is scarcely necessary to say, the usual publication is impossible; but several highly valued friends, in the University and elsewhere, have expressed a strong desire to see the publication of the discourses already delivered, and of as much of the remainder as might appear on examination to be sufficiently finished to be presented

to the public. It was found that the two Lectures next in succession were nearly completed; but of the rest none were sufficiently advanced even to be submitted to their friendly inspection. It is in compliance with the wishes, and in deference to the opinion of these kind friends, that the following discourses were committed to the press.

By the same advice are subjoined two Sermons delivered in St. Mary's, on Whit-Sunday, 1845. They are connected with the Bampton Lectures as well by an incidental bearing on the same topics, as by the circumstance of their being delivered before the University. Together with the Bampton Lectures they complete the short list of discourses delivered by the late Bishop from the University pulpit.

M. S.

Wyaston, October, 1847.

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LECTURE I.

ISAIAH VIII. 20.

*To the law and to the testimony ; if they speak
not according to this word, it is because there
is no light in them.*

WHATEVER may be the peculiar characteristic of the critical age in which our lot has been cast, it clearly is not indifference to the general subject of religion. Hardly ever perhaps was there a time in which religious questions were more freely discussed in public and private, or in which religious considerations entered more largely into the formation even of political parties, or gave a more decided colour to the current literature of the day. This is so far encouraging that he who would do his Lord's work feels that there is at least sensibility in the public mind; his efforts are not chilled by apathy nor paralyzed by contempt; he has something to act upon and grapple with; and though there may be many adversaries,

“a great door and effectual” is spread open before him. For this we may well be thankful, and certainly should endeavour to turn it to the best account, but it is important to bear in mind that excitement is not an invariable evidence of healthy action: and thus all this religious interest, and the ready access which religious questions have gained into our social intercourse, may only tend to prove that the standard of the religion professed, has been brought by controversy within the sphere of general interest, and so reduced to the level of the popular mind, not that public opinion has been brought into subjection to the obedience of Christ. Hence religion of a certain kind and degree may be in favour, without the Kingdom of God having been materially extended; and while open infidelity is frowned upon and repudiated, there may still be little real faith. We may even go further, and say that there may be the most implicit belief in certain religious opinions, and the most entire submission to the teaching of the visible church, without any faith in the word of God, or any devout allegiance to his supreme will. Unquestioning credulity, and a superstition which, like that of the Athenians, would receive even an “unknown God,” for fear of rejecting any thing which might possibly be “called God, or be worshipped,” is consistent

with entire neglect of "the law and the testimony" of God, and with all but an open rejection of its authority. Nor is what is called "implicit faith" merely *consistent* with practical infidelity, but so far as it is a blind submission to human teaching on divine subjects instead of referring all to the revealed word of God, it is of the very essence of unbelief, for it trusts man rather than God. Wherever the appeal is not made on all religious questions directly and simply "to the law and to the testimony," the course of our argument will tend to shew that there is no spiritual light, there is no real faith.^a They whose indiscriminating credulity received "gods many and lords many" were condemned for not retaining God in their knowledge, and were punished by the visitation of so strong a delusion that they "believed a lie," under the influence of which they worshipped the creature rather than the Creator who is over all God blessed for ever.^b Superstition and infidelity have often been contrasted, but it is important to observe carefully their points of contact, and even of coincidence; for they have a common origin, and produce similar results: they are of their father the devil, and the

^a Titubabit fides, si scripturarum sacrarum vacillet auctoritas. Aug. Doc. Christ. 2, 9.

^b Rom. i. 25.

works of their father they do.^c It is not simply by reaction that superstition and infidelity produce each other, so that the blind devotee, when light breaks in upon his mind, rushes to the opposite extreme of absolute unbelief, or the audacious infidel yields himself up to the most abject spiritual bondage; but these principles act upon each other reciprocally as cause and effect. The carnal indifference of one age produces the voluntary humility and will worship of the next; but neither come from God; for asceticism is not piety, nor is superstition faith; and in both instances the carnal mind was seeking rest by a way of its own, instead of the way of God's appointment. The very same state of mind which rejects the righteousness of God, goes about to establish its own, substituting religious formalism for spiritual life; but formalism without life not only is not of God, but is the most subtle shape which spiritual delusion can assume, for it satisfies the conscience with the semblance of godliness, and consecrates the self-indulgent habits of the world after exacting from them the propitiatory sacrifice of some acts of external mortification.

A similar remark will apply to the intellectual manifestations of the carnal mind; for an unenquiring submission to ecclesiastical authority, is usually

^c John viii. 44.

little more than the refuge of scepticism or indifference, despairing of making its way to divine truth through a host of difficulties, or satisfied for the sake of peace to give up the investigation, and yield a passive assent to the teaching of others; but in neither case is there faith in God. Indeed submission to ecclesiastical authority as such, and irrespective of any personal conviction that what is thus taught is really derived from the Bible, is as essentially rationalistic as if we were to treat the Bible as a dead letter to which our own reason is to give a living meaning and power, for in the latter case we yield assent to our own reason, and in the former to the reason of other men, but in neither case are we the believing disciples of a "teacher come from God." Human authority under every form is essentially rationalistic. It makes the word of God of none effect, developes into simple rationalism, and has not any resting place until it settles into a system which does not even profess to be contained in the Bible; and though deducing its origin historically by successive changes from the former ages of the church, rests actually upon the dominant opinion of the present age. But this developed system is not another gospel. It is simply a form of theosophy moulded according to human conceptions, and the act of mind by which it is embraced may be

belief in man, but clearly is not faith in God, unless the authority from which it is derived be itself inspired, and so becomes in fact the voice of God.

It is most important to draw these distinctions, and to unravel the web of sophistry by which submission to man's teaching is confounded with belief in the record which God has given us, for confused ideas on this point lie at the root of no small portion of the multiform errors of our day, and prevent men from observing the identity of the conflicting evils with which we are threatened, from rationalism on the one hand, and authority on the other; both of them obscuring and superseding the word of God, and submitting it to the bar of human reason. We are tempted to think that if we have persuaded men to submit to what we believe to be truth all is gained; but we must bear in mind that if they have submitted their judgment to our authority, without having been convinced that what we teach is really contained in the Bible, they have not performed an act of faith, but of reason. They have received our teaching, not as the word of God, but as the word of man; and therefore even though their opinions be scriptural, yet their trust has been given to a human teacher, and is not an exercise of faith in God. In the same way, and

for a similar reason, if we receive the Bible as the record of honest men who reported to the best of their knowledge what they had heard or seen, and deal with it as the human, and therefore fallible, history of divine facts, our faith is not given to the Bible as a revelation from God, but to a religious system of our own, which the Bible has only assisted us to construct: and here again there is no exercise of faith in God. Until the will of man is brought down to the will of God, and the reasonings of man are subjected to the teaching of God, no advance is made towards a state of harmony with the divine mind; there is neither light, nor life, nor real faith. Therefore our great object as Christian teachers must be to bring men to the Bible, as the record which God has given them, and by which they must be judged at the last day. We must shew them that before this inspired volume all their preconceived notions must bow, and that they are responsible to God for bringing to the study of its contents a prepared and teachable spirit, and for the employment of every legitimate means with which they have been furnished. We contend as much against the presumption of ignorance deciding on things beyond its reach, and despising its appointed teachers, as we do against a blind and passive submission to merely human authority.

With this limitation, however, we are bound to assert not simply the right of private judgment, but its duty, and to shew that no man can evade the responsibility of employing the reason which God has given him, to understand the volume in which God has been pleased to reveal to him His will of love and mercy.

To this great object I propose to dedicate the course of lectures on which we are entering, and to maintain the SUPREME AUTHORITY OF HOLY WRIT against the claims of tradition and authority, on the one hand, and of presumptuous and rationalistic speculations on the other.

It is hardly possible to form an exaggerated estimate of such a subject, especially at such a time as the present, and he who addresses you in conscious weakness and an unfeigned sense of his inability to treat so high an argument as it ought to be treated, would earnestly solicit your prayers that He of whose word we are about to treat would be pleased to lead us into all truth, to preserve us from all error, and so to bless the whole discussion that we may be edified together, and the good estate of Christ's holy Catholic Church be thereby promoted.

Let me first observe that my object shall be to conduct an enquiry which must partake, in some degree, of a controversial character, as far as pos-

sible in an uncontroversial spirit, remembering that we are enjoined to "speak the truth in love,"^d and that if we look to influence the spirits of our fellow men, it must be not by contentious wrangling, but by the exercise and exhibition of that heavenly wisdom which "is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."^e We should bear in mind that we have to do in this matter not with men, but with things, and the object present to our mind should be not individuals, but opinions, and these viewed only as they bear upon the general interests of the Church. Besides which, if ever there was a time for a contentious handling of the subjects at issue among us, that time has passed. At present we have to do much more with feelings than with arguments; to break the spell of mystical illusion; to recall men from medieval visions to common sense, and the plain letter of the Bible; and to solicit back their wandering affections to the Church of their Fathers, and teach their morbid taste to relish the simple but wholesome spiritual food which that Church has provided for them.

We must also bear in mind that men who were once devotedly attached to the National

^d Eph. iv. 15.

^e James iii. 17.

Church in which they were first dedicated to God, and His promises of grace pleaded for them, could not have been estranged from it, or even led to look beyond it for spiritual support, or consolation, or excitement, without the application of powerful motives, and probably not without considerable misconception of the ground taken at least by thoughtful men among their opponents. Were those who are not carried away by the blind impulse of party feeling to explain their views in calmness and candour to one another, though I am far from thinking that there would not be still found to be very grave and vital points at issue in the great controversy of the present day, yet assuredly much misconception would be removed, and the ranks would be increased of those who, for the sake of unity of spirit and action, are content to merge strict uniformity of expression, and can overlook circumstantial points of difference, while rallying round essential points of agreement. For the sake of these, the men of comprehensive wisdom and patient love among us, I am anxious, before entering upon the direct assertion of the supremacy of Scripture, to point out several concessions, or at least what may by some persons be regarded as concessions, which ought to be made.

Such are the following:—

I. In the first place, we must concede that natural religion is antecedent to revealed religion ; for we must believe that there is a God, before we can be persuaded that He has spoken. “ He that cometh unto God, must (first) believe that He is, and (then) that He is the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him.”^f If a missionary were to find himself among a people so savage that they had no idea of a great Spirit above them, and the source of all things, it would be a vain task to present them with the Bible, even if they had been taught to read, and to comprehend its contents. He would, in the first instance, have to appeal to “ the heavens which declare the glory of God, and the firmament which sheweth his handy work,”^g and to prove that “ the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that men are without excuse.”^h Without going further into this subject, it seems hardly possible to deny that we are taught this lesson by St. Paul in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, and I am anxious to make the remark from a strong conviction that very perilous statements have been put forth by some zealous advocates of

^f Heb. xi. 6.

^g Ps. xix. 1.

^h Rom. i. 20.

the necessity of a revelation from the assumed impossibility of our having any knowledge whatever of God from external nature, or from the operations of our own minds. Still it is most true that man could not by his own searching “find out the Almighty to perfection,”ⁱ as a Being holy, just, and true, and yet full of love to penitent sinners. This is the mystery unfolded in the gospel, the revelation of “God manifest in the flesh.”^k

II. We may concede, secondly, that God might, had it so pleased Him, have made known both his character and his will to man without a written communication. “God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not; in a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed, then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man.”^l We cannot limit the Almighty in his methods of spiritual communication, for “He giveth not account to us of his matters.” He “who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things;” and this last very

ⁱ Job. xi. 7.^k 1 Tim. iii. 16.^l Job xxxiii. 14.

remarkable expression may mean not only that all blessings centre in Jesus, and are conveyed through him, and in him, to his body the Church, but that every previous mode of divine revelation pointed to the visible revelation of the Godhead in the flesh, and had its full expression in that mysterious utterance of the mind of God, speaking to man, in the actings of a man, that man might hear and understand, and so the finite might in some limited way attain unto a knowledge of the Infinite.

Man had been favoured with revelations oral, personal, prophetical, and when, at last, the complement of them all, the actual revelation of God manifest in the flesh, was granted, there was nothing to prevent the Spirit, when taking of the things of Christ and revealing them to the Church, from using all former methods of communication in this last, and most glorious dispensation. Indeed even now our only question must be whether they who profess to reveal to us the divine will, have in truth a divine warrant?

III. We must moreover allow, thirdly, that when the Son of God, the living Word, proclaimed the Father's will of love, he did so by oral teaching, and did not during his personal ministration dictate any written document. This is a remarkable, and perhaps a significant fact,

for it clearly might have been otherwise, and the reason is not so very obvious to us why, as the old law was given to Moses in a graven document, and he was himself inspired to collect all former revelations, and commit them to writing, together with those which had been made to himself, there was not some corresponding record of that new law which was to be written on the hearts of God's people, not in the letter only, but in the spirit, that it might be to them the seed of life.

Nor was this the case only while the Lord Jesus was going in and out among his disciples, manifesting the Father to them in all they saw him do, and in all they heard him speak, but even afterwards for several years, "the salvation which was first spoken by the Lord"^m was verbally handed on, and confirmed to the faithful by those who heard him, as we shall have occasion more fully to observe hereafter. It would seem that nothing was committed to writing until the Spirit had led the disciples into all truth, and *the faith* was fully delivered to the saints; for there is reason to believe that even the gospel of St. Matthew was not written long before the earliest epistle of St. Paul, which exhibits the Christian system in its complete development. The question therefore is not between a written, or an

^m Heb. ii. 3.

oral revelation ; for all methods not only might have been adopted, but have actually been employed ; but whether we have a faithful record of the mind of Christ, as he was a faithful exhibition of the Father's mind ; and whether that record is complete, and self-sufficient so to speak, in the written document which we possess ?

IV. Hence it will follow, fourthly, that if it can be proved that any part of our Lord's actual teaching, the words "such as never man spake," the things which, as St. John says, "if they should be written every one, even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written"ⁿ—If, I say, it can be proved that any of those divine acts or sayings, not written by evangelists or apostles, have nevertheless been preserved, by sure and unbroken tradition, in the household of faith, these things also would claim our belief, and minister to our edification. Whether there are any such divine records so preserved is a practical question which will be discussed hereafter, but we are bound at once to make this hypothetical concession. At the same time we must bear in mind that such oral traditions must be subject to the same critical scrutiny as the written word, and if the use of a diphthong can make all the difference between the Catholic

ⁿ John xxi. 25.

faith and heresy, with what jealousy ought we to scrutinize what professes to be an unwritten word of God?

V. For the same reason, however, by which we are bound to receive such an unwritten record of the words of Christ, if it can be authenticated, it will follow, fifthly, that if it can be shewn that an apostle, or other inspired teacher, taught anything to the Church, *as of divine authority*, this also would be binding on us still. But it is important to limit this concession to those things for which a divine warrant was claimed; for though every word of Christ had vital power, it would not follow that all the teaching, however sound or pious, of Moses or David, of Isaiah or Malachi, of the Evangelists or Apostles, were of universal obligation, unless it could be shewn that they, God's accredited messengers, had communicated them *as such* to the Church. The Spirit dwelt without measure in the Son of God. He was the express image of His person, the clear and unclouded reflection of His mind. *All* therefore that He said was divine; and *all* that He did presented a perfect example. But this cannot be said even of the Twelve, not simply because it would include the Traitor (a consideration full of meaning) but because they had each only their several gift of the Spirit of God,

and in other points were liable to error, and actually did err, as in the case of one among the very chiefest of them whom his brother Apostle "withstood to the face, because he was to be blamed."^o In this careful manner must we guard our concession respecting the authority even of a well authenticated apostolical tradition, if such can be proved to exist in the sense in which the phrase is usually employed; for we must be satisfied respecting it, both that it was originally of divine authority, and that it was designed to be of perpetual and universal obligation.

VI. Then with regard to the mode in which the Church received the apostolical teaching, we may acknowledge, sixthly, that the Creeds contain the substance of what was taught orally before the Gospels or Epistles were written; but this concession is of no great moment, inasmuch as the only Creed which has the slightest claim to an apostolical origin, though most precious as a document of venerable antiquity, and a summary of Christian truth, not only contains nothing that is not expressly and plainly written in the Gospels or Epistles, but does not even, as the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, give a more formal, and, so to speak, more scholastic expression to the doctrines of Scripture, especially that

^o Gal. ii. 11.

cardinal one of the proper Divinity of our blessed Lord, than may be gathered from Holy Writ. Whether it can with any accuracy be said that the Creed was collected from the oral teaching of the Apostles, as distinguished from the written gospels, may be a matter for curious ecclesiological investigation, or speculation, but does not materially affect the question before us. While it is clear that the Creed teaches no other doctrine than is contained in the written word, and while it is at least not clear that it rests upon the same divine authority, we receive the Creeds generally with reverential deference, as evidence of the truths received by the Church at and up to the time at which they were promulgated; but we must remember that our Church demands our faith in their contents, not as original documents, but because "they may be proved by most certain warrant of holy Scripture."^p The Creeds, as a summary of Scriptural truth, prepare us for what we are to expect to find in the Bible; and thus direct our investigations, and confirm or restrain the conclusions we may be led to deduce from the study of Scripture; but Scripture authenticates and limits them, not they Scripture. This is the touch-stone by which they must be tested, and was, as we hope here-

^p Art. 8.

after to prove, the source from which they were derived.

It is, however, important, even at this stage of our enquiry, to protest against the logical fallacy which is contained in a phrase which has formed the staple of many arguments on this subject; namely, that "the substance of the Creed is older than Scripture."^a The correct statement of this proposition would be that the substance of the Creed is older than the substance of Scripture, which every one may perceive is only true in the sense in which it becomes identical. The facts and doctrines contained in the Creed were doubtless taught before any part of the New Testament was written, because what is contained in the New Testament, the substance that is of Scripture, was first orally communicated; but there is no evidence that the Creed acquired a fixed or written form, until long after the volume of inspiration was completed, written, and published; and there is much evidence, on the other hand, to the comparatively recent origin of even what is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, and there is absolute proof that it did not assume its present form for some centuries.

^a The Rule of Faith. A Sermon by Archdeacon Manning, p. 76, 2nd. Edition.

VII. But it may be thought that whatever be the source of the divine doctrine possessed by the Church, the fact of its possession by the body of Christ is at least a presumptive evidence of its truth, and that if we could shew of any doctrine or practice that it had prevailed in the Church from the beginning, and wherever the true faith of Christ was professed, we should be constrained to yield our believing submission to such teaching, and to receive such institutions, as of divine authority and universal obligation.

In propositions of this kind there is such a mixture of truth and error, of assertion and proof, of hypothesis and fact, that it is not easy to unravel the web of sophistry which is thus constructed, and this point will be matter of special and separate investigation. We may however admit to a certain extent at least, the soundness of the celebrated *dictum* of Vincentius Lirinensis,^r that, on the one hand, we should receive with all deference those doctrines which the Universal Church of all nations, and of all ages, had ever received under the warrant of the revealed Word of God ; and that on the other hand we should be unwilling to receive any doctrine of which it could be clearly shewn that there was a time prior to which it had never been heard of in the Church, except

^r "Quod semper et ubique et ab omnibus," &c.

perhaps as the private speculation of individual doctors, for in that case there would be a presumption, amounting to moral certainty, that it could not be contained in the plain letter of God's Word. Whether there are any doctrines, especially those which are matters of controversy among professed Christians, respecting which antiquity, universality, and consent, can be absolutely predicated—for an unlimited conclusion must not be deduced from a limited premiss—is a question of fact with which we are not now concerned, but we may allow that he would be a rash and most self-sufficient theologian, giving little evidence that he possessed the spirit of God, who should set his own private judgment against that of all other Christian men. Still if, on the other hand, a man yielded simply to authority, even of the Universal Church, without the personal conviction of his own judgment that what was taught was really contained in the very words of the Bible, he would have yielded to man, and not to God.

It is important also to observe that even the Monk of Lerin himself limits the negative application of his *dictum* (which in fact was not his, but had long prevailed in the Church) to *recent* heresies, and allows that it will only serve to shew that doctrines which we know, and can

prove, to be of recent introduction are not divine, but human. When thus limited this is a test from which the Church of England need never shrink, and indeed it is one to which she has constantly appealed. It is in fact the rule according to which she receives as "Holy Scripture those canonical books of the Old and New Testament of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church."^s

It is however a matter of some difficulty and judgment to apply this rule to individual cases, and the necessity for the limitation we have taken will appear from the well known fact of some books of the New Testament having been admitted into the Canon respecting which there was considerable doubt at one time, and that very generally in the Church of Christ; while others have been rejected which were at one time very extensively received.

Negatively however the rule has great force, and our Church has not received into the Canon any books which were ever universally rejected by the Church, as the Apocryphal books of the Old Testament; nor has she rejected any which were ever universally received. She has considered the whole a matter of evidence, and has accepted or rejected books, claiming to be divine,

^s Art. 6.

according to the grounds which there were for believing their claims to be well founded or otherwise. She appealed in fact from the authority of Augustine, and the recent Western Church, to the evidence of Jerome, and the earlier Church writers of the East.

VIII. This last point touches clearly upon the great question of the authority of the Church in the interpretation of Scripture, to which the same rule, with similar limitations, will very nearly apply; but in connection with this subject, we may safely concede, further, and eighthly, that there are matters of external observance, "traditions and ceremonies,"^t as our Church calls them, such as modes of Church government and of worship, the alteration of the day of sacred rest, and the like, which not being of the essence of the faith, and, "being things in their own nature indifferent, and alterable,"^u "need not be in all places one and utterly alike,"^x but may be established or changed upon the simple authority of the Church, which is binding, at least to this extent, on all her members. "The Church hath power to decree ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith,"^y but every Christian community is responsible to God and

^t Art. 34. ^u Preface to the Prayer Book. ^x Art. 34.

^y Art. 20.

man for the due exercise of this right, and the application of this authority, and will be guilty of schism if she decree ceremonies which are repugnant to the letter or spirit of God's word, or will have lapsed into heresy if she teach for doctrines the commandments of men, controverting the teaching of Scripture.

On this head too it is important to note the significant fact that it is only in the sense of what relates to external observances that our Church ever uses the word *Tradition* in the Prayer Book, and when in the first Homily she speaks of "what are called apostolical traditions," or doctrines for which an apostolical, as distinguished from a scriptural origin, is claimed, it is only to condemn them in the strongest language of which our homely mother tongue is well capable. And this she does while claiming for herself "authority in controversies of faith," in the exercise of which authority the articles of religion were drawn up and imposed, and she requires further the dutiful submission of her children, who belong to her only so far as they agree with her views of the essential doctrines of Christianity, as deduced from Scripture.

IX. Lastly, we would not withhold our assent from the statement that Scripture no where asserts its own sufficiency, or even inspiration, as a

whole ; but this admission must be qualified by the following observations :—

a. First, it is not the sufficiency, nor even the inspiration of Scripture, which we are now concerned to maintain, but its *supremacy*, as the one rule of faith and practice ; or if that expression be objected to as having been applied by early writers to the Creeds, we would explain it by saying that our object is to prove the Bible to be, practically, the only divine record we possess, and the one standard of truth and error, to which all must appeal, and by which all may be guided into truth. The sufficiency and the inspiration of the Scriptures rest on ample proof, partly external, and partly internal, and though there is some truth in the remark that they are not directly asserted in any one passage of the Bible respecting the whole book, yet it certainly is at least very significant that the sacred Canon should conclude with that remarkable declaration, “ If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book ; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.”² Though the letter of this very solemn anathema applies only to the book in which it is con-

² Rev. xxii. 18, 19.

tained, its spirit is applicable to the whole volume of God's revealed will, and condemns those alike who detract from the authority of any part of the inspired record, and those who add to it human traditions. Thus also the command given by God to Moses, expressly guarded against the tendency of man to adapt the law of God to his own ways of thinking; "ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it."^a So that in both dispensations there was a warning to the same effect, and one of the heaviest charges brought by our Lord against the Pharisees is that they had transgressed the command of God both positively and negatively; they "had taught for doctrines the commandments of men," on the one hand, and on the other, they "had made the word of God of none effect through the traditions" which they had delivered from one generation to another.^b

Such then are the concessions with which it seemed to be important, and indeed our bounden duty, to prepare the way for the discussion of the important subject before us: but when we sum them all up, it will appear that they amount only to this, that God might have spoken to us otherwise than He has done, and that whatever can

^a Deut. iv. 2.

^b Mark vii. 7, 13.

really be proved to be His word, whether written or unwritten, is entitled to supreme authority over our faith and practice.

Having therefore disposed of these preliminary and theoretical matters, our enquiry will be mainly a practical one; namely, how God has actually spoken to us; in what way we should submit ourselves to His teaching; and whether we have reason to believe that there is, in the traditions of the Church, or elsewhere, any concurrent or supplemental revelation, which either explains the sense of the written word, or supplies its deficiencies, so that the whole makes one body of divine truth. This enquiry is most important, for it is clear that whatever teaches the sense of Scripture with an authority to which we are bound absolutely to submit, becomes in fact a revelation to us, and must be even of greater moment to us than the written word itself, as will be seen when we come to discuss the practical bearing of tradition, and Church authority, on revelation. Therefore it becomes us most carefully, not to say anxiously, to distinguish between what is human and divine in religious teaching; for while we bow with reverential and silent submission to "every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God," the same feeling of humble piety will make us "very jealous for the

Lord of Hosts," lest the word of man be received as the Word of the living God, for this produces the same practical effect as when the divine authority of God's Word is denied. It is the more necessary to be watchful on this point because most of the great corruptions of the truth have arisen in the first instance from a confusion of this nature. It was by *adding* the services of Baal to that of Jehovah that Israel first transgressed, and provoked the Lord to anger, and it is a remarkable feature in the whole history of paganism that, with few exceptions, there were always traces of one supreme God to which the multitude of inferior deities were not only accessory but subordinate. It is well known also that in the religious books even of the Hindoos, polytheism is condemned almost as distinctly as in the Bible.^c So also idolatry was not, usually, the actual worship of the material idol, but the

^c South Indian Sketches, p. 19. The Vedas must have been compiled at least 1,400 years before Christ, that is, in the time of the Judges: and about 500 years after, or near the time of Jehoshaphat, a code of laws was drawn up, bearing the name of "Menu." Both of these give much insight into the state of religion and polity in those distant ages; and though the doctrine in the code of Menu is less pure than that of the Vedas, yet in both, we may find proofs that the knowledge of God was not then quite extinct. There is in both of them a distinct acknowledgment of one Supreme Being, the Creator of heaven and earth, while the use of images is discouraged and the form of worship seems to have been patriarchal, the head of each family officiating as its priest.

employment of a sensual object to aid the mental operation of worship addressed to the Deity represented by the idol. Thus again to adduce a case still more directly in point, the Pharisees appealed to the Bible at the very time when they were superseding its teaching, and the talmudical writings of the Jews were always placed in a position of theoretical subjection to the Bible, though they usurped one of practical superiority, because they taught the *sense* of Scripture, which is more precious than the mere letter, and applied rules not contained in Scripture to the daily concerns of life, which is a matter in which every man is far more nearly concerned than in any merely abstract speculations.

Thus also with regard to ourselves, our contest even with the Church of Rome is not that the supremacy of Scripture is denied in so many words, but that it is practically superseded by the admission of Tradition to the same homage, reverence, and obedience, as are due to the Word of God. There is a real distinction between the teaching of the Church of Rome on this subject, and the views of some at least of those among ourselves who have of late pleaded for the authority of Primitive Tradition. But we have had many solemn warnings to beware of yielding any credit to the vague and floating testimony of

Tradition on doctrinal points, unless confirmed by most certain warrant of holy writ. This, be assured, is the point on which to take our resolute stand; for when once we drift from the sure anchorage of God's word written, there is no saying into what ocean of superstitious reveries, mystical hallucinations, rationalistic speculations, or even of unlimited and bottomless scepticism, we may not be carried, before we are aware, and even while we deem ourselves most secure in the guidance of primitive orthodoxy, and catholic consent. "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this rule, it is because there is no light in them;" where we may observe, by way of practical application, that the heavenly light is lost first, and then men resort to the "sparks of their own kindling." "When the religion professed is decayed and full of scandal, you may expect the rising up of new sects." When personal piety faints and dies within, the Bible is no longer relished as the record of a Father's love, for the veil is on our hearts while we read it, and being unwilling to lay the blame on ourselves, or our want of spiritual discernment, we assume the essential obscurity of the Book; we then look elsewhere for an authoritative teaching which will at once save us the labour, and we hope also the responsibility of

religious thought, and diligent, humble, supplicating enquiry, and which will at the same time supply us with a more objective worship, adapted to the carnal state of our mind. In this way a worldly and careless life leads to a formal religion, for men soon learn to adapt their theories to their practice. If therefore we would be preserved from the terrible downfall of lapsing into some form or other of antichristian error, for antichrist is not one but many, his name is *Legion*, we must “keep the heart with all diligence, knowing that out of it are the issues of life.”^d It is only by the careful maintenance of childlike communion with our God and Father that we shall continue to find the simple truths of the Gospel so refreshing, and so satisfying to our souls, as the very bread of life and the waters of salvation, that we shall not be induced to look elsewhere for instruction or excitement. Personal piety, is the best safeguard of doctrinal integrity.

^d Prov. iv. 23.

LECTURE II.

HABAKKUK ii. 20.

The Lord is in his holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him.

IT will be in your recollection that among the explanations and concessions with which it seemed necessary to introduce and qualify the assertion of the supreme authority of Holy Writ, we did not deny the possibility of the mind of God being conveyed to us by an unwritten tradition. So that the real question is a practical one; namely, whether the Bible is the exclusive and supreme teacher of divine truth to man; for if God speaks by that Book, and by that only, in his Church, "all the earth must keep silence before him."

We may indeed, and we ought, to seek for human assistance to enable us to understand what God has said, and are bound to defer to the authority of our own Church in matters of faith, but this deference and all human aids are not to

supersede but to assist and guide our own proper judgment, for our absolute unquestioning submission must be given exclusively to the Record itself, whatever be its form, oral or written, and our best aid will be that of the Spirit of God preparing our hearts to receive, and comprehend the message. It is obvious that this is a question of the utmost importance, for we have no distinct and settled views of Truth while the standard by which they are to be tested is vague, and undefined; and it is eminently *the question* of the present day, in which the controversy between us and the Church of Rome, and kindred systems, has been revived, and cannot be declined by those who are the appointed teachers of the nation. The cardinal point, however, of that entire controversy is now, as it always has been, whether Scripture be supreme in matters of faith, or whether there are Apostolical traditions in the Church which are to be received with equal reverence and submission. Not, observe, whether there might be such traditions, for we do not deny the abstract possibility of their existence, nor even whether, if they did exist, they ought to be received with the same implicit faith as is due to Scripture itself, for on this head the conclusion of the Council of Trent,^e startling and

^e Sess. iv. "Necnon traditiones ipsas, tum ad fidem, tum ad

even blasphemous as it appears to those who are accustomed to regard the Bible as the only inspired record, may be successfully defended, if once it be allowed that there is in the Church an “unwritten word of God.” This is one instance among many of the acuteness and logical accuracy with which the Church of Rome has deduced her conclusions from assumed premises, and also of the boldness with which, unrestrained by public opinion, or the fear of contradiction, or the charge of inconsistency, she has pushed her principles to their legitimate issue. Those who advocate principles which are at variance with the doctrines to which they are pledged, will be timid, wavering, and inconsistent, because they will be ever attempting to fix their argument in the middle of its course, but the Church of Rome, however its agents may practice a discreet reserve in this country, does in its authorized documents teach boldly, plainly, and consistently, that she is in possession of an “unwritten word of God,” which is to be received on precisely the same grounds, and with the same assent, and unenquiring submission—“*pari pietatis affectu*”—as God’s word written. We have then to investi-

mores pertinentes, tanquam vel ore tenus a Christo, vel Spiritu Sancto dictitas, et continua successione in Ecclesia Catholica conservatas, pari pietatis affectu, ac reverentia suscipit, et veneratur.”

gate the fact here assumed of the existence of this unwritten word of God, and to shew that the authority of Scripture, the testimony of Christian antiquity, and the teaching of our own Church, are all opposed to the idea of there being an oral record of divine origin, which supplies the deficiencies of Scripture, explains its difficulties, or fixes its interpretation.

Our immediate object this morning will be the scriptural part of the question; but before we proceed to establish from the Bible its exclusive claim to be our divine instructor, consider what is the level of divine dignity, and absolute authority to which any other record, written or unwritten, must be raised before it can occupy the place of a concurrent teacher of divine truth. We submit to the Bible as the word of God, because we believe that it was written by holy men of God, who were filled with the Spirit, and "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."^f When we refer to the writings of these holy men we find them distinctly asserting in many instances and implying in all, that they had no original ideas to communicate, that their words were not of private interpretation, and that they were only the instruments by means of which God was speaking to man. For instance, to begin with

^f 2 Pet. i. 21.

Moses, "the Mediator of the old covenant,"^g whose distinguished office it was to collect, embody, and sanction all the traditions which had gone before : how does he act with reference to the patriarchal traditions, which were indeed the unwritten word of God ; and how does he speak of the nature of his own commission ?

In the first place, we have to bear in mind that those patriarchal traditions had been preserved, so far as they were preserved, by the longevity of those to whom they had been confided. Noah was born a little more than a century after the death of Adam, and lived six hundred years with Methuselah, who was himself for more than two hundred and fifty years a contemporary of Adam, and witnessed for about the same period his father Enoch's walk with God, until that holy man " was not, for God had taken him" to his rest. The special provision by which during the whole antediluvian period of about 1,500 years the oral conveyance of the revelation originally made to Adam was entrusted to only one intermediate person, shews the watchful care of God over his truth through belief of which man was to regain his lost estate. And yet the general, and with the exception of a single family, the universal departure from God of the ante-

^g Gal. iii. 19.

diluvian world, notwithstanding the prophecy of Enoch respecting the coming of the Lord,^b and the preaching of righteousness by Noah through the Spirit of Christ for 120 years, shews how necessary this provision was to preserve among men any saving knowledge of the Most High.

From the Flood to the Exodus was another period only about half the length of that from the Creation to the Flood; and here, again, we may observe the same merciful provision. The average duration of the life even of the favoured line to which was entrusted the unwritten oracles of God was not indeed equal to the days of the years of their antediluvian forefathers, but the period itself was so much shorter that nearly the same practical result was obtained. On the one hand Isaac had lived fifty years with Shem, who had not only been saved with his father in the ark, but had lived nearly one hundred years with Methuselah, the contemporary (as we have seen) of Adam: and on the other hand, the days of mourning for Isaac had not yet come when Joseph was sold into Egypt, and Joseph had been dead little more than sixty years when Moses was born, so that Moses might have heard from many living witnesses the act of faith by which “Joseph when he died made mention of the departing of the

^b Jude, 14.

Children of Israel, and gave commandment respecting his bones.”ⁱ On that “night much to be observed”^k when the hosts of the Lord were delivered from bondage, and were baptized to a new life in the sea, the embalmed body of the patriarch Joseph, wrapped in cerements, and decorated with eloquent hieroglyphics (as was the manner of the Egyptians to bury) borne along in the midst of the “sacramental host of God’s elect,”—his holy Catholic Church—told its own silent story, and formed the connecting link between the unwritten tradition of former ages, and the book of God’s law which Moses was inspired to write. Hence we see that the sacred tradition, “the unwritten word of God,” had passed through only three hands between Joseph and Adam; namely, Isaac, Shem, and Methuselah.

Such was the provision made by God for preserving, during this second period, the knowledge among men of his character, and his will. A merciful provision indeed, but assuredly not greater than the case required, when we bear in mind how soon men, notwithstanding, forgot the knowledge of the Most High, and that almost every form of paganism may be traced up to corruptions which owe their origin, if not to Ham, and Japheth, at least to their immediate

ⁱ Heb. xi. 22

^k Exod. xii. 42.

descendants. And not only so, but even Terah the father of Abraham was, we know, an idolater,¹ and the children of Israel appear to have nearly lost all distinct knowledge of God, or at least to have suspended all public worship of Jehovah during their captivity in Egypt.

Hence we learn, from Scripture itself, how insecure was the custody of Tradition, even under the most favourable circumstances, and what need there was of a written document to preserve men from error and darkness.

The next point on which Scripture may instruct us is the position of isolated dignity, and supreme authority, which the written document, so mercifully given to man, claims to occupy. When Moses after this period of spiritual darkness in Egypt was first commissioned to declare God's will to his countrymen, God said to him, "I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say."^m So that when Moses is directed to employ Aaron as his spokesman, the remarkable expression is used, "He shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God."ⁿ Afterwards we meet constantly with the solemn phrase "Thus saith the Lord," and are told that "God spake to Moses all the words of

¹ Josh. xxiv. 2.

^m Exod. iv. 12.

ⁿ Exod. iv. 16.

the law," "as a man speaketh unto his friend;"^o and that the tables of that first covenant were engraven with the finger of God—"the writing was the writing of God."^p The ecclesiastical polity and ordinances were framed strictly according to the pattern shewn him and the instruction given in the mount, and Moses was commanded to commit these words to writing.^q The five books written by one to whom God had been so nigh, descend to us with a sanction to which no merely human document, written or unwritten, can lay claim, and this divine record at once supersedes all reference to the oral traditions which had gone before, and which are in fact embodied in its sacred and mysterious contents. Nor is it among the least observable peculiarities of the Pentateuch that while it embodies the previous oral teaching, and perhaps the general contents of some written documents, as "the book of the wars of the Lord,"^r it makes no reference whatever to any traditional knowledge of God, as of authority in matters of faith and practice, and leaves nothing to be supplied by the collective spiritual knowledge of the Church, but on the contrary declares, in the most solemn manner, much as the Evan-

^o Exod. xxxiii. 11. ^p Exod. xxxii. 16. ^q Exod. xxxiv. 27.

^r Num. xxi. 14.

gelist John at the close of the Apocalypse, "ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."^s And yet it is instructive also to observe that when Moses refers to the external institutions of patriarchal theology, as, for instance, the observance of a day of holy rest, the offering of sacrifices, and the sacrament of circumcision, they are not spoken of as new things, but as recognized and established ordinances; and all that Moses is commissioned to do with regard to them is to give directions as to the manner in which they are to be observed. He thus indicated a marked distinction, which we shall hereafter see reason to believe was maintained by our Lord himself, between ecclesiastical traditions of external observances, and those which relate to matters of faith, which could not under ordinary circumstances be entrusted to oral transmission.^t

In order also to secure still further the preservation and accuracy of the divine record, there is a remarkable command given in anticipation of the monarchy which was predicted; namely, that on the inauguration of the anointed sovereign, when he came to "sit upon the

^s Deut. iv. 2.

^t Deut. xxxi. 19.

throne of his kingdom, he should write him a copy of the law in a book out of that which was to be before (or in charge of) the priests, the Levites.”^u It is true that the priests, to whose custody the book of the law was entrusted, were its authorized expositors, the umpires and judges of disputes between man and man, and those to whom it belonged to decide without appeal between clean and unclean, and specially in cases of leprosy, but they were to decide according to the written word, and not according to any oral traditions preserved amongst themselves. Yet even this limited authority is no where given in the New Testament to Christian Ministers, or to the general assembly of the Church (except in the age of inspiration) for all were alike to be the recipients of the same spirit who was to lead them into all truth, and give them an unction whereby they should know all things necessary for their souls’ health.

The same absence of all reference to any concurrent oral teaching, and the same assumption of absolute supremacy for the written word, distinguishes every subsequent period. David, “the sweet psalmist of Israel,”^x speaks much of his value for the Scriptures such as he had them in his day, and is so far from looking for any

^u Deut. xvii. 18.

^x 2 Sam. xxiii. 1.

supplemental teaching elsewhere that he says "I have more understanding than all my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts."^y

Observe too how, at the close of his life, he speaks of that portion of the divine record which he had been honoured to reveal; "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue,"^z where we see that, like Moses, he regards himself simply as an instrument by which God made known his will, so that the very words were not his, but the actual words of God. Such is the scriptural idea of inspiration, and he, by whom it is simply received, will not readily admit any document, written or unwritten, to a like position, for he will require strict evidence of its being the expression of the mind of God; and practically we shall find that low views of inspiration very commonly accompany a tendency to receive Tradition upon an equality with Scripture, or to admit rationalistic modifications of its teaching.

It would be easy to refer you to all the prophets, as many as have spoken, from Isaiah when he saw the glory of Christ and spake of him,^a

^y Psal. cxix. 99, 100.

^z 2 Sam. xxiii. 2.

^a Isa. vi. 1, compared with John xii. 41.

to Jeremiah dictating at the bottom of his dungeon the fearful words of God to Baruch,^b and Malachi introducing, as it were, the long expected "Messenger of the Lord of Hosts"^c into his Temple, that he might be heard speaking there with a voice of authority and power. We might shew that all these holy men, moved by the Spirit of God, and writing, not their own words, but His, claim for what they write an authority by itself, and above all other which does not proceed directly from the inspiration of God: but it is unnecessary to do this, for this all believers in the Bible know, and are persuaded of.

Let us then pass on from the testimony which the Old Testament bears to its own supremacy, both by its direct assertion, and by practically absorbing into itself all other divine communications, to consider that which is given by our Lord and his Disciples in the New Testament to the former revelation, and to whatever can claim to be an inspired document.

What was the state of the world when He the great teacher, the visible incarnate God, suddenly came to his Temple speaking and acting there? The second Psalm was to all appearance very far from its accomplishment, for not only had the kingdoms of this world not become the

^b Jerem. xxxvi., xlv.

^c Mal. ii. 7.

kingdom of Jehovah and of Christ, but the Prince of this world, the abomination which maketh desolate, had enthroned himself even in the very house of God, and had first to be cast out thence, that God might enter and be heard, and being heard might be worshipped. Man was talking there very wisely of his Traditions and his washing of pots and pans, his days and months and years, his sabbaths and new moons, his evasions of the law, his complement to its provisions, but all had to be silenced that God might be heard—and He was heard.

Is it true that the Lord is now in his holy Temple, and that He is speaking? Yes, it is true. He dwelleth not in Temples made with hands—John saw none in the new Jerusalem—but in the contrite humble heart: that is the Temple of the living God; there He dwells who inhabiteth eternity and there He speaks. If we are of His mark he dwells in us, “I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one,”^d and He speaks to us. Let us be silent ourselves and hush every human voice into silence, that we listen to his voice of love but of supreme authority, and that having heard we may obey, “for obedience is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams.”^e

^d John xvii. 23.

^e 1 Sam. xv. 23.

Though the complete Bible does not witness to its own completion, yet we have the advantage of the break between the two Dispensations, and the independence of the Records by which they are revealed, that the latter stamps the former with divine authority, and teaches us, further, in what way we should receive "every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." In this respect, as in all others, the conduct of our Lord with regard to the Old Testament, and with regard also to the Traditions currently received by the Jews of his day, is full of instruction to us, and to the men of all ages, and all countries, communions, and churches, for in that conduct is embodied everlasting and unchanging truth. How then did Jesus act with regard to the religious records, divine or human, of the Jewish Church, and their ecclesiastical institutions, whether derived from the law as given by Moses, or established by the authority of the Church?

This question is answered in few words as far as the Scriptures of the Old Testament are concerned, for it is hardly necessary to remind you that our Lord refers to them, and to them exclusively, as the oracles of God, the authentic exponents of the Father's will, and the supreme guide of man in all that he was to believe, and

do, and hope for. He appeals to them as the record in which the Jews confided and desired all whom he addressed to search therein for their testimony to himself. He does not send them to the traditions of their church, nor to the Sanhedrim, nor to Doctors, Lawyers, Scribes, or Pharisees, but to Moses, and David, and the Prophets. "Search the Scriptures," he says to the plain men around him, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me."^f But the Jews came short of this eternal life; they attained not unto the righteousness of God; and both our Lord, and his disciples, explain to us the reason to have been that they took counsel of each other, instead of going directly to God. "How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? For had ye believed Moses ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me."^g And in the same spirit when the rich man in the parable would have Lazarus sent to his brethren for their special warning, the authority and sufficiency of Scripture is emphatically asserted. "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them; for if they hear not Moses and the Prophets,

^f John v. 39.

^g John v. 44.

neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”^h

To the same effect is the manner in which our Lord proves the doctrine of the resurrection,ⁱ not from tradition, or the authority of the Jewish church, but from what might otherwise appear the somewhat obscure indication of Scripture in the language of God to Moses at the bush.

It may be objected on this head that on one occasion our Lord said to the multitude, and to the disciples, “the Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat; all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works, for they say, and do not.”^k Now in reference to the objection which may be raised on this text we have to observe, in the first place, that it is no part of our argument to release men from the obligation they are under to submit lowly and reverently to their spiritual pastors and teachers, or to invalidate the proper authority which belongs to the regularly appointed ministers of religion, and still less to that of the Church at large, as will appear when we come to speak specifically on that part of the subject. But we do aim at defining the proper limit of that authority, and at asserting the

^h Luke xvi. 29. ⁱ Matt. xxii. 31, seqq. ^k Matt. xxiii. 2.

supremacy of the Bible *in all matters of Faith*, and the duty of every individual to rule himself by its dictates, and to judge by this infallible standard, which is sufficiently plain for all practical purposes, of the pretensions even of Prophets, who might be wolves though they came in sheep's clothing.¹

But we may further observe that the decisions of the Scribes and Pharisees to which the people were to submit were those which referred to legal questions, and the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic ritual, and were such as Moses had himself directed that the Priests should at all times hear and judge ; Aaron and his sons after him were to put difference between unclean and clean that they might teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord had spoken to them by the hand of Moses.^m So again it was ordered that the Priests should constitute a court of final appeal to which absolute submission should be paid in "cases between blood and blood, plea and plea, stroke and stroke :"ⁿ which is no more than the jurisdiction, in civil and criminal actions, which the supreme court of every nation must possess. The people are directed to study God's word, and to teach it diligently to their children, as their plain guide ; and the points to be referred to the

¹ Matt. vii. 15.

^m Lev. x. 10, 11.

ⁿ Deut. xvii. 8.

Priests related to the evidence of particular facts, and the application of the simple letter of the law to each individual case. There was no doubt, for instance, that a leper was unclean, and should be separated from the congregation, the doctrine was clear, and unquestionable, but the Priest was to decide whether the spot he saw was one of leprosy or not; and afterward he was to decide whether or no it had been healed. Hence we have every right to assume that it was our Lord's meaning that all practical questions respecting the application of the law should be referred with entire submission to the Scribes and Pharisees who were the appointed judges of such matters; but we cannot for one moment suppose that doctrinal questions were to be referred to those who rejected Jesus as the Christ, and whom he denounces in the very passage before us not only as "hypocrites, blind guides, serpents and a generation of vipers," but whom he charges with having "made the word of God of none effect by their traditions," and with "taking away the key of knowledge"^o by interposing their corrupt gloss between the people, and the plain letter of the Bible.

When, however, we turn from the question of an authorized interpretation of the written law,

^o Luke xi. 52.

to the manner in which our Lord treated the traditions of the Jewish church, the case is far more simple, and is strictly analogous to similar questions which are now raised in the Christian church. In applying this analogy we must bear in mind that the Jewish and the Christian church are not two bodies, but one; and that this one church has grown up in these last days, by the nourishment ministered to it by God, from childhood into manhood; and therefore has an increased capacity for the reception, and comprehension of divine truth. We should remember also that this question respecting the traditions of the Church as supplying the sense of Scripture, and meeting cases for which there was presumed to be no express provision in the Bible, is not new to the Church. If *we* require the aid of tradition to teach us the way of the Lord more fully respecting the doctrine of the Trinity, the Lord's Day, Infant Baptism, Church Government, and Scriptural difficulties, we should bear in mind that it was a question in the Jewish Church whether even the cardinal doctrine of the resurrection could be deduced from Scripture without tradition, or rather we may say that the Saducees denied it because it was not, as they supposed, revealed in the Old Testament, and the Pharisees rested their belief on this, and many other points,

on the Traditions which had of old been received among them, and for which it would have been quite as easy and plausible to have assumed a patriarchal authority as it is to refer any Christian traditions to the teaching of the Apostles. We know too that these traditions of the elders had assumed a systematic form long before the Advent, and that the Jews regarded them as the oral law, and of the same authority, and even antiquity, as the written law, for they believed that both were revealed by God to Moses on Mount Sinai, and should therefore be received by his Church, to adopt the language of the Council of Trent, "*pari pietatis affectu, ac reverentia.*" The two cases are strictly parallel; and yet a single text will be sufficient to give our Lord's decision on this important matter. "Ye have made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."^p So that our Lord decides this point, and declares that a tradition of extreme antiquity, received by what would be regarded as the entire sound or orthodox portion of the Jewish Church, and which professed to explain doubtful points of Scripture, and to supply a rule where Scripture was silent, came under the condemnation of adding to God's word, was

^p Matt. xv. 6, 9.

teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, and thus made the commandment of God of none effect, and rendered the worship of those by whom it was received as a subsidiary rule of faith, vain and unacceptable to God. There could, surely, hardly be a stronger case on this whole question, or one on which we have a more distinct and unequivocal decision ; for the case ruled was not simply that the tradition was false and erroneous, but that it was an addition to God's word, which it practically superseded.

There is, however, another point closely connected with the same subject on which our Lord's decision was somewhat different ; though here, as ever, most instructive. I allude to his conduct in respect of those ecclesiastical ordinances which were confessedly of human institution, and being in themselves innocent, or even useful, did in no way interfere with the supreme authority of Scripture. As one instance of this we may mention our Lord's attendance at the Feast of Dedication, which had been appointed about 200 years before,^a by Judas Maccabeus, after the pollution by Antiochus Epiphanes, and therefore had only a similar origin, or authority with our state holidays. Yet we find Jesus at

^a B.C. 170. 1 Macc. iv. 52—59.

this Feast walking in the Temple, in Solomon's porch, and teaching the people.^r

But another matter, and one which is even still more applicable to the present circumstances of the Church, is the conduct of our Lord, probably, and of his disciples, certainly, with regard to those parts of the church government which had not been determined by the law of Moses. I refer to the constitution, and entire discipline of the synagogue. It is a very remarkable fact that the law made no provision "for the congregation of the people^s to exalt Jehovah continually," in the towns and villages of Judea, even on the Sabbath day. There was no form of prayer provided even for the Temple at Jerusalem, and no provision for the instruction of the people by public preaching. Yet we know that there were synagogues scattered throughout the land; that Moses had of old those who preached him in the synagogues every Sabbath day :^t that there was a liturgy in use among them, and a regularly constituted order of ecclesiastical officers. We find several of these officers distinctly mentioned by the evangelists. For instance, Jairus a ruler of the synagogue^u we find falling down before the feet of

^r John x. 22.

^s Ps. cvii. 32

^t Acts xv. 21.

^u Luke viii. 41, 49.

Jesus and entreating him to go into his house, and heal his daughter. Then we have afterwards the chief of the synagogue sending word that the child was already dead. We read moreover of Elders^x sent by a Centurion to request our Lord to heal his servant. In another passage^y we find the minister (*ὑπηρέτης*) filling the office of a deacon, for he received at the hands of our Lord the book of the Prophet Isaiah from which Jesus had just read,^z and restored it to its place. These officers, or at least the Chief-priests, or Scribes,^a for they seem to have been identical, and were perhaps the same as the rulers of the synagogues, had a seat in the Sanhedrim, and we find them there at the trial of our Lord. The Mishna has reference also to another officer mentioned in the Apocalypse : namely, the Angel or messenger of the Church. It may be shewn that *ἀπόστολος*, *ἄγγελος*, *ἐπίσκοπος*, are convertible terms, or at least that they are used without any precise distinction. We know, too, from sources independent of the New Testament, that these officers, and this state of discipline, existed ; and such being the case we find both our Lord, and his disciples, habitually frequenting the synagogues on the Sabbath day ;

^x Luke vii. 3.^y Luke iv. 20.^z Isaiah lxi.^a Matt. xxvi. 57, compared with verse 59.

and not only so, but there is every reason to suppose that this was the model on which the government of the Christian Church was formed. Under the law, a Temple, Priests, and Sacrifices were provided, but the form of worship was left to the ordering of the Church. Under the Gospel when the One priest had offered his one sacrifice, there was neither Temple, nor sacrificing priest, nor an offering for sin, but there was a synagogue, there were Apostles with the chief general authority over the Churches, and each particular Church had its ruler, whatever might have been his name, which is of little moment, and under him there were assistant ministers. All this was recognised by our Lord, and adopted into his Church ; but still, as was the case with its original in the synagogue, not as a matter of divine command, and therefore essential to the very being of a Church, but of good order, to which all wise-hearted and humble people would willingly and thankfully submit.

A similar remark will apply to the Baptism of our Lord. This was an ordinance not mentioned in the law, but altogether a human institution, and yet our Lord not only submitted to it at the hands of John, but gave as his reason that “ thus it became him to fulfil all righteousness.”^b To

^b Matt. iii. 15.

this case we might add the payment of tribute ; but these instances are sufficient to shew that “the mind of Christ ” was disposed to sanction and adopt existing human institutions, when not in themselves wrong, and to make his absolute rejection and denunciation of the whole body of traditionary teaching the more emphatic and instructive.

We might also refer to the account of the temptation of our Lord, which was doubtless intended to teach us how we ought to resist the devil, and to shew how our Lord himself met, and designed that we should meet, scriptural difficulties. We may observe that in this mysterious transaction the temptations are such especially as believers may be exposed to, and that they are derived from Scripture. The lesson we learn from it is, that if one text of Scripture is difficult of comprehension, and liable to be misapplied, we need not look beyond the Bible to have our doubts resolved ; but if we are of a teachable spirit shall find some other scriptural passage too plain to be misunderstood, and directly bearing on the case in hand.

When we pass from the personal teaching of our Lord to that of his inspired Apostles, we find the same mind. We find them constantly proving from the Scriptures that this is very

Christ.^c They reason out of the Scriptures, and quote Moses, and the Psalmists, and the Prophets, as we may see very particularly in the addresses of Peter at the day of Pentecost, and of Stephen at his martyrdom;^d and indeed in every case where the argument was with those who acknowledged the authority of the Old Testament.

In the various discussions also which arose about circumcision, the general obligation of the law, intercourse with Gentiles, and similar matters, we never find any reference made to any oral teaching of Christ not contained in the gospels as we have them, still less to any special revelation made, as the Gnostics supposed, to a select number from among the apostles. Indeed it is very remarkable how little reference there is in the Apostolical writings to the details of our Lord's life and teaching. We have summaries, much in the nature of the early creeds, as for example 1 Cor. xv. 1, &c., but referring only to the leading facts of Christ's work of redemption, and chiefly to the evidence of his having come in the flesh, and having really died, risen, ascended, and returned

^c Acts xvii. 2—5.

^d [The reference to historical tradition in the narrative contained in this speech cannot be justly urged in the present argument, as it was the intention of the author to have shewn in the notes to have been appended to these Lectures.—ED.]

to the throne of glory. There is only one saying of our Lord preserved in the Apostolical writings; namely where St. Paul desires the Ephesian elders to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."^a A very precious fragment, doubtless, of that heavenly manna with which the Church had been fed, but it was the very commandment of love which they had from the beginning. Surely it is utterly inconsistent with the idea of an "unwritten word" of divine authority existing in the Church, that this should be the only saying of our Lord's quoted by the Apostles, and this not bearing on any of those doctrines, or practical points, which perplexed the primitive Church, and needed the special teaching of the Spirit; leaving many points still to try our faith and patience, that we may learn to be contented with our ignorance where God has not spoken, and not seek to be wise above what is written.

Besides this, we know from the Acts and the Epistles, how the Apostles taught their converts from Judaism or Paganism. They did not require implicit faith in their word, but conviction, the result of scriptural investigation; an investigation guided doubtless by the instruction of the

^a Acts xx. 35.

Apostles, and influenced by their miracles and authority to a degree peculiar to that case; but still their faith was to come by hearing, and to be the result of conviction that these things were so. I need only refer to the well known case of the Bereans, in which it is clear that the Apostle encouraged them to search the Scriptures for themselves, and not to be satisfied unless they found there what had been taught them: for thus only would their religious faith be their own. The Apostle first taught the Bereans from the Bible, and then referred them to the Bible to satisfy themselves that he had taught them truly; he sought not to have dominion over their faith, but to be helpers of their joy.^f

Nor let any one suppose that though this was true of the first principles of Christianity, there were other and higher doctrines, strong meat not generally given to all, which had been deposited in the oral teaching of the Apostles, and not committed to writing lest it might fall into hands not prepared for its reception. This would have been a very natural idea, especially to those who had been accustomed to the Cabbala of the Jews, or the mysteries of the Pagans; and we know in fact that this was the basis of the early *γνῶσις* before Gnosticism assumed an heretical

^f 2 Cor. i. 24.

form. But refer to St. Paul's case of the mystical term *perfection*, and you will find that he knew of no *perfection* which was not revealed in Scripture, and might not be attained by God's blessing on the reading of the Old Testament in the light of the Gospel. A single instance may be sufficient to illustrate this remark. In that touching allusion which he makes to the pious education of Timothy, he says that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus: (that is, through the reception of the Gospel) and that it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be *perfect*, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."^s Here then is the man of God (the true Gnostic, as Clement of Alexandria would call him) leaving "the principles of the doctrine of Christ," and "going on unto perfection,"^h being made wise unto salvation; receiving all that was required for his instruction in righteousness, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works; and this by such plain teaching as a faithful mother could give her docile child, for whom she sought, and obtained, that "preparation of heart which cometh only from the Lord."ⁱ Thus when God revealed

^s 2 Tim. iii. 15—17.^h Heb. vi. 1.ⁱ Prov. xvi. 1.

himself in his book, Eunice and her son were enabled to say with Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

So also when a Christian female studying the Bible at home came to any difficulty, it is very instructive to observe the course which the Apostle directs her to take to have her doubts resolved. She is not to go to the Church, and talk to the presbyters and congregation about her perplexities, but if she would learn any thing, she is to "ask her husband at home."^k

Such was the character of Christian teaching even in the age of the Apostles, and when, if ever, the Church was in possession of some special instruction not contained in the Gospels; but we find all along that reference is made to "those things which were written," and that the apostolic writings contain no additional facts, while they expand and elucidate the doctrine of the Gospel, and that with a clearness and point which tend to impart saving wisdom.^l

^k 1 Cor. xiv. 35.

^l We may observe that on several occasions the Apostles refer to their writings as provided for the express purpose of *fixing* the faith of the Church: for instance, Luke i. 3; 2 Pet. i. 12, 15, where St. Peter goes on to give a sort of creed, v. 16. &c. So St. Paul having warned the Ephesian elders against grievous wolves, Acts xx. 29, wrote his epistles to confirm that Church. So again St. Peter, 2 Peter iii. 2, refers to the Old and New Testaments, and to St. Paul's epistle, as scripture.

The same remark applies to the last apostolical document; for in the Apocalypse we have indeed a wonderful insight into the future, together with the trouble which should come upon the Church from without, and the heresies which were to distract it within, many of which were even then working; but still there is no reference to any authorized interpretation of Scripture, none to any absolute ecclesiastical authority in matters of faith, and still less to any one visible centre of Christian union, other than the living Head, even Jesus, and the one faith in Him. And thus the distinguished Apostle who wrote a supplemental Gospel to supply all the instruction needed by the Church at that time, respecting Jesus and his personal ministrations, with special reference to existing heresies, was spared several years beyond the lives of the other Apostles and Evangelists to bestow upon the Church a written record, that there might be no doubt of the things to come, which the spirit of Christ had revealed, and that nothing might be taken from this revelation of the will of God, or added to it.

Yet, we may observe that even in the Apocalypse, written when the Church was perplexed by diversities of opinion on fundamental points, there is no reference to a living infallible teacher; and though the Church was distracted by here-

sies and sects, there is no mention of a visible centre of union.

Thus have we seen that before the knowledge of writing was communicated to man, precautions were taken by God, through the longevity granted to the Patriarchs, to secure the oral revelation from the danger to which it was then exposed; and that afterwards, when once the record of God's will was committed to writing, the supremacy of the record was maintained, and no concurrent authority recognized by which its sense could be determined, and what men might conceive to be its omissions supplied. The fact is that the omissions of Scripture, its silence upon some points which man is most curious to know, are not among its least instructive peculiarities; and as when "the Lord speaks" the "whole earth should keep silence before him," so also when the Lord does not speak, man must not presume to conjecture respecting things unseen: for we can know nothing of God beyond what he is pleased to reveal to us of himself. "The things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God."^m Humility is the gate of wisdom.

But if Holy Scripture be, as I have endeavoured to prove, the one supreme rule of faith and practice, permit me, in applying this subject, to

^m 1 Cor. ii. 3, 11.

lay on you, my brethren in the service of our common Lord, the recipients and stewards of the revelation of his will, the solemn charge which I would take to myself, that ye handle not the word of God deceitfully, either by endeavouring to bend it to your own notions, or by partially communicating what has been unreservedly committed to your keeping. We must honestly bring all our speculations to this touchstone to see whether they be gold or no, and should cast away the dross from us. If this be indeed the very book of God, how shall man dare to torture its meaning to his own sense, or, dealing with it as the word of man, endeavour by conjectural criticisms to construct from it narratives and doctrines other than the simple words convey? If this be also the message of our Heavenly Father to the universal family of his children on earth, how shall man, in his presumptuous ignorance, venture to say what part of that message may be communicated, and to whom, and what part should be kept back and reserved for the special instruction of other men, and other times? It is the manna which the Lord has caused to rain down from heaven round about our tabernacles in rich abundance, sufficient, but not superfluous. Gather it up and feed upon it yourselves, and hand it on to your children in

confiding gratitude, for it is the very bread of life. Treat this blessed book, the record of God's mercy in Christ to perishing sinners, with undoubting loyalty. Fear not to give it free and large circulation, for it is essential to sound theology, as is the air we breathe to the healthy exercise of our animal functions. Trust God with the effect of his own book on the souls of men. We may say with Augustine *noluit taceri quod voluit scribi*, and although some may wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction, even as their table, and common daily mercies are a snare to many, this is no reason why we should presume to withhold them from others, or shrink from referring all our teaching to that one standard of everlasting truth; the standard, be it remembered, by which all of us shall be judged at the last day.



LECTURE III.

JUDE 3.

Ye should earnestly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

WE have seen that while the revealed will of God had not yet been committed to writing, but was preserved in the patriarchal traditions, it pleased God to guard it from corruptions by the longevity granted to the Patriarchs; and that when once Moses had been commissioned to collect and write down the prophecies, histories, and doctrines which had been thus preserved, and to add to them the communications with which he had himself been favoured, this written volume, the Book of the Law, became the sole depository of truth; the one supreme and exclusive rule of faith.

We have seen too that when the canon of the Old Testament had been concluded, and our Lord had given to the entire document of the

faith, as received by the Jewish Church, his divine sanction, he not only did not recognize, but in the strongest terms condemned and rejected the entire body of doctrinal traditions which that Church had received, though he at the same time confirmed its confessedly human ecclesiastical ordinances.

It has been shewn also that although the Evangelists did not profess to relate all that Jesus did or taught, yet that their narratives were regarded as so perfect that we have only a single sentence of our Lord's teaching added in the whole course of the apostolical writings.

It has further appeared that these apostolical writings appeal to the existing Scriptures as their document, and make no reference to any concurrent infallible authority as then existing, or as about to be raised up in the Church, and that the last of these writings concludes with a solemn anathema against any one who should add to the words of that book, or deduct any thing from them.

So far then the authority of Scripture is supreme; and indeed the supremacy of Scripture is so essential to its inspiration, that the strongest advocates for the concurrent or at least subsidiary authority of Tradition have hardly ventured to deny it in so many words, though their theory

does practically make this acknowledged supremacy of none effect.

This theory is, that Scripture being a dead letter unless the sense be added, when once the inspired interpreters of Scripture were withdrawn, it was necessary to look elsewhere for some authority to fix the sense. The necessity thus assumed, which in fact discredits the promised aid of God's Holy Spirit to every devout and humble enquirer, has led to most of the erroneous ideas which have been held on this subject.

It has led, for instance, some persons to believe in an oral teaching of the Apostles faithfully transferred from one christian teacher to another; but they have not yet been able to give us any summary of that teaching. Others have held the practical infallibility of the universal Church, but have not been so clear respecting the test of universality, nor the seat of infallibility. Others, observing that the decisions of the universal Church, or at least of what they regarded as such, had been various and contradictory, have maintained the theory of development, which takes away all fixedness of doctrines, and requires a constant inspiration, completely superseding the written record we possess of the faith once delivered to the saints. The Church of Rome, assuming this theory, has not hesitated to decree

in its private council held at Trent, that not only the apocryphal books, but even the vague, unwritten, undeveloped traditions current in its communion, are to be received with precisely the same dutiful reverence as the written word of God. We shall have occasion hereafter to discuss these propositions more particularly, but having first consulted Scripture for its decision as to the paramount authority which it claims to exercise over our faith, our next and immediate question will be, what doctrine did the ancient Fathers of the Church gather from Scripture on this subject? Did they claim for themselves, or recognize as existing anywhere in the Church, an unwritten word of God, or an infallible judge in matters of faith, and if not what directions did they give to the enquirer after truth? How, in short, did the Fathers of the Church propose to establish truth, and to refute error?

If the Church has always believed in the existence of an unwritten word of God, a faithful tradition of apostolical teaching, over and above the Scriptures, we shall, doubtless, find it most clear and abundant in the immediate followers of the Apostles, and most distinctly enunciated in the creeds and councils of the early Church.

If, moreover, the apostolical Fathers, and the creeds and councils of the early Church, become

thus divine documents supplying the defects of Scripture, and fixing its sense, we shall find them appealed to by all subsequent writers as at once decisive of every controversy that could arise in the Church, and determining every doubtful question among its members.

Let us then enquire how far this is the case; beginning with the apostolical Fathers; for if they do not recognize and appeal to an authoritative Tradition, the first link in the chain is wanting.

This consideration makes their writings of extreme importance to the whole question in which we are engaged; and the conviction of its importance has led to the fictitious homilies, epistles, constitutions, recognitions, and canons, which have been palmed upon the Church in their name; and to the corruption and interpolation of their authentic remains to such an extent as to throw a degree of doubt and discredit on what we have on the whole reason to believe to be genuine.

Nor is it only that the remains of the apostolical Fathers are few and scanty, but those we have were for the most part written under circumstances which did not admit of the declaration of their opinions on many of the points which have since agitated the Church. These reverend men seem to occupy the position of the leaders

of a small band in the face of a superior force. Their call is to steadiness and subordination : that each should keep his rank, and stand to his post. Such circumstances will account for the strong expressions they use respecting the importance of subordination and discipline, but they are not suited to general exhortations however useful at other times, and still less to abstract speculations however sound. Therefore we look in vain for answers to many theological questions of the greatest interest in the Apostolical Epistles which were written by men who, to use the language of Eusebius with regard to Clement, “as they had seen the blessed Apostles, and had been connected with them, might be said to have the doctrine of the Apostles sounding in their ears, and what they delivered before their eyes,” and who had witnessed the sufferings even to death of some from among the noble army of martyrs, and were anticipating, almost with impatience, the hour when the same crown of glory might fall upon their own heads, or on those of the flock they were appointed to feed. We want to know, for instance, how the infant Church walked alone when not only its Lord left it, as far as his bodily presence was concerned, but when his twelve

chosen witnesses had also, one after another, been removed; and we learn indeed that the Church was not comfortless, but was strengthened to do and to suffer, though we do not gain very full information respecting its discipline or doctrine, at least until a somewhat advanced period in the second century.

The testimony of the Apostolical Fathers is, unquestionably, most interesting and valuable as far as it goes; their very silence on some points recently agitated is full of instruction; but its value is chiefly of a negative kind: for they establish little, but disprove a good deal. Even on some of the cardinal doctrines of the faith the testimony of the earliest, and in some respects the most eminent among them is so far from being distinct that Photius questioned the orthodoxy of Clement of Rome on the doctrine of the Trinity; though knowing as we do how firmly the doctrine was held by the Church at Rome in his day, the absence of a dogmatic assertion on the subject tends rather to shew that this epistle was written before the Churches of Rome or Corinth had been distracted by formal controversy on this vital point. So with regard to the Supreme authority of Scripture, we have not direct assertions of its exclusive claim to be

the teacher of Truth, but what we gather from Clement's epistle to the Corinthians is that the Bible, as we now have it, was practically appealed to by all parties as the one authoritative teacher of the faith, and guide of conduct; and we meet with no rival or concurrent source of divine knowledge.ⁿ Clement wrote, too, be it remembered, not simply in his own name, but in that of the Church at Rome to "the elect and sanctified Church of God at Corinth;"^o and he wrote on two points, one of discipline, the other of doctrine, on either of which a living authority, or an universally received oral tradition, would have given irresistible force to his arguments, and weight to his exhortations. But I need hardly remind you that not only does Clement Bishop of Rome not claim, either for himself, or his Church, any authority over the sister Church at Corinth, but even the author of the pseudo-Clementine epistle, written probably a century later, recognises Jerusalem as the metropolis of Christendom, and her Bishop as having precedence over all Christian pastors. I am quite aware

ⁿ [Compare his frequent *γέγραπται γαρ*, and especially i. cap. 45, *φιλονεικοὶ ἔστε, ἀδελφοί, καὶ ζήλωται περὶ μὴ ἀνηκόντων εἰς σωτηρίαν. Ἐγκύπτετε εἰς τὰς γραφὰς, τὰς ἀληθεῖς ῥήσεις πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου.* See also cap. 53.—ED.]

^o Inscription of the first Epistle.

that in this argument it is not enough to shew that the primitive Fathers quoted Scripture as of divine authority, for that even Romanists allow, but we must shew further positively that they treat the Bible as the only divine teacher, and, negatively, that they do not refer to any other teacher as explaining infallibly the sense of Scripture, or speaking with divine authority where Scripture is silent.

Bearing this in mind, observe how Clement argues when he would suppress the ecclesiastical sedition at Corinth. There Presbyters (for nothing is said of Bishops, at least by that name) who had been appointed by the Apostles, or by those who had received ordination from those so appointed, with the consent of the whole Church, and who had for many years exercised their ministry with fidelity and zeal, had been wantonly ejected by the people, who were themselves not only insubordinate, but also unsound in the faith. How natural would it have been for him in such a case to have alleged an apostolical tradition to prove that the congregation had usurped an authority which did not belong to it, and what a summary way would this have been of dealing with the whole case. The entire absence then of all such reasoning is direct evidence that Clement who had lived with the Apostles, and their

contemporaries, was not possessed of any such tradition beyond the written gospels and epistles. Therefore we find him appealing to the Scripture constantly, fully, and exclusively. He goes over both the Old Testament and the New for arguments and examples, so that a very considerable portion of his Epistle consists of quotations from Scripture, some of which may be thought not very pertinent, but which he treats as leaves from the oracles of God, and as the very voice of God himself. His plea never is, such is the teaching of the Church to which you must submit, and such the authority of its decrees pronounced by me ; nor does he refer to traditions received from Peter or Paul, but his constant argument is "Thus it is written." The only exception to this is when he reminds them of the injurious effects of their sedition on the Church, and the disgrace and scandal which it had occasioned among those who were without.^p Then he says "Seeing that those things are manifest to us (referring to quotations from Scripture) and having looked into (ἐγκεκυφότες) the depths of divine knowledge, we ought to do all things which the Lord has commanded in order, and at the appointed time." Here he not only speaks of the

^p Cap. 40.

Scripture as the *depths of the divine knowledge*, anticipating that esoteric *γνῶσις* to which Clement of Alexandria gave too great a sanction, and which developed into the heretical gnosticism of the next age, but he uses here, as in many other parallel passages, an expression (*ἐγκυφότες*) which Polycarp^q also delights to use in the same sense ; strikingly indicative of the intense earnestness with which those who came early to the sepulchre looked into the place where their Lord had lain ; and with which to adopt the allusion of St. Peter^r the angels figured by the Cherubim over the ark of the Covenant, looked into the mysteries of the New Covenant : or with which a believer is represented by St. James as looking into the written record of the Covenant “the perfect law of liberty.”^s And Clement having thus referred to Scripture in general, to the preaching of the Apostles testifying of Jesus, and to the teaching of Jesus testifying of the Father, directs the special attention of the Corinthians to their own apostolical epistle. “Take (he says) the Epistle of the blessed Paul into your hands. What did he first write to you in the beginning of the gospel ? Verily he did by the Spirit admonish you concerning himself, and Cephas, and

^q Cap. iii. speaking of St. Paul's Epistles—*εἰς ἃς ἐὰν ἐγκύπτῃτε.*

^r 1 Peter i. 12.

^s James i. 25.

Apollos, forasmuch as even then ye had begun to fall into parties and factions.”^t

Would not this have been a most fitting occasion for one who had known both Paul and Cephas, and probably witnessed the martyrdom of those two great apostles of the Gentiles and the circumcision, to have referred to their personal teaching, and to such oral directions as they might have given when about to put off their fleshly tabernacle? Here was the very case afterwards put by Tertullian, when he referred heretics who perverted Scripture to the support of their errors to the Apostolical Churches where the authentic epistles of the Apostles were still received.^u But does Clement assume that such privileges were any adequate security, even in the second century, against false doctrine, heresy, or schism; and is not his very silence decisive that he, and the Church in whose name he wrote, not only claimed no authority over other churches, but that they had no oral teaching, no unwritten word, no authoritative interpretation, which they could bring to bear upon the matter before them?

The same remark will apply with even additional force to the manner in which Clement handles the doctrinal question of the Resurrection, on which it is sad to think that the Church at Corinth

^t Cap. xlvii.

^u Tert. De Præser. c. xxi. p. 209.

should, at so early a period, have fallen into serious error. It is almost humiliating to find Clement proving the Resurrection to Christians, who “for the time ought to have been teachers,” not only from Scripture, from the growth of seeds after they have been buried, and the formation of the bud after the leaf has fallen off, from day and night, and from our awaking out of sleep ; but even from the fabulous story of the Phoenix.* Yet in the midst of all these arguments, drawn from such various and questionable sources, there is no reference even to a generally received creed, or to any authority whatever external to the Scriptures, from which there could be no appeal.

When we turn to Ignatius, a man by no means indisposed to exalt the authority of the Church, we find that though his epistles afford us less information on the matter in hand than the single epistle of Clement, this holy man, and constant martyr of Jesus Christ, kindles our love, and animates our zeal, by his devotion to his Lord and Master : and though there are many exaggerated expressions, even after every allowance is made for forgery and interpolation, which make us feel that we are not reading an inspired record, yet we are disposed to make every allowance for an aged Bishop hurried along by the Roman soldiers,

* Clem. ad Cor. i. 25, seqq.

“leopards,” as he calls them, who never left him day or night, until he arrived at the spot where he cheerfully committed his body to the wild beasts set to devour him, and commended his spirit to his God and Saviour. We cannot wonder that one made thus “a spectacle to angels and to men,” should have been exposed to the temptation of “thinking of himself more highly than he ought to think,” and he warns his Christian friends not to spoil him by their flatteries, nor to disappoint him of his martyr’s crown by their solicitations on his behalf. He seems indeed from one passage to have been so far carried away as to believe that special revelations had been made to him as a martyr, which ordinary Christians, as “babes in Christ,” were unable to bear;^y but this state of exaltation, which touches upon the notion of an esoteric tradition, only renders the more remarkable his entire deference and submission to the Scriptures, and the absence of all pretension to any tradition received by him from St. John, or any of the primitive Christians.

The main subject of his exhortation is, as it well might be, to unity, and absolute submission to the Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, “*as unto the Lord.*” Yet on this subject he, like Clement, refers to nothing but Scripture; and has not a

^y Ignat. ad Rom. v. seqq.

single word about any apostolical tradition which fixed the exact gradation and duties of every officer and member of the Church. When he endeavours to secure the Philadelphians against the danger to which they were exposed from false teachers, who appear to have been of a judaizing character, he speaks of himself as “fleeing to the Gospel as to the flesh of Christ,”^z and exhorts them not to listen to any teachers who did not “speak concerning Jesus Christ.” He calls upon them to return to unity, and the counsel of their Bishop, that they should do all “according to the instruction of Christ.”^a And there is a passage of great obscurity in reply to some who declared that they would not believe the Gospel unless they found it written in some other ancient monuments,^b (or it may mean, unless confirmed by the Old Testament,) in which he says, “I answered them, ‘It is written;’ and to me Jesus Christ is instead of all ancient monuments in the world, together with those undefiled monuments, his Cross, and Death, and Resurrection, and the faith which is by him; by which I desire, through your prayers, to be jus-

^z Ignat. ad Philad. cap. v.

^a Cap. viii.

[^b The interpretation depends on the reading. The MS. reading *ἐν τοῖς ἀρχαίοις* “in antiquis vaticiniis” is acknowledged by the Latin version, and defended by Jacobson, Credner and others, as well as by Hefele in his last edition. Others read *ἀρχαίοις* “archivis, monumentis.” Vid. Hef. ad l. c. ed. 3. Ed.]

tified." Here, at least, is no reception of the Bible on the authority of the Church; nor any reference to an external tradition to explain its contents; but a simple appeal to the written word, as the one document in which are the words of eternal life. So again, when he exhorts Polycarp how to deal with those who appeared to be faithful, but who were heterodox teachers, he exhorts him to "stand firm as a warrior who, though wounded, is victorious," patiently waiting upon Christ.^c Though there is little of a positive nature in this passage, yet his very silence, when treating of schism and heresies, teaches us that Ignatius knew nothing of a rule of faith distinct from the Bible, or even subsidiary to it; nor of any supreme ecclesiastical authority by which such disputes could be settled, and insubordination restrained. We feel that the advice given in this case is very different from that which would have been given even a century later.

There is a remarkable agreement between Ignatius and his brother bishop, Polycarp, not only in general sentiment and doctrine, but even in the use of some peculiar words and phrases, which the latter probably caught from the former. There are the same pleadings for unity, and subjection to their "Presbyters and Deacons, as unto God,"^d and for a gentle dealing with those who

^c Ignat. ad Polyc. cap. iii.

^d Ignat. ad Polyc. cap. v.

were in error; but more especially there is a similar exhortation to search (ἐγκύπτω) the Bible for “the faith once delivered to the Saints.” In this spirit we find Polycarp congratulating the Philippian Christians that “the root of the faith which was preached from ancient times, remained firm in them, and was fruitful;”^e and then he shews what those “ancient times” were, and by whom that fruitful root of righteousness had been planted. “These things,” he says, “my brethren, I took not the liberty myself to write unto you concerning righteousness, but you yourselves before encouraged me to it. For neither can I, nor any other such as I am, come up to the wisdom of the blessed Paul, who being himself in person with those who then lived, did with *all exactness and soundness teach the word of truth*; and being gone from you, wrote an epistle to you, into which if you look (ἐγκύπτητε) ye will be able to edify yourselves in the faith that has been delivered unto you; which (faith, not the church) is the mother of us all.”^f This surely is not the language of a man who considered the Church as the depository of an unwritten tradition, which was the real document and teacher of the faith, which was only to be proved or attested by Scripture; or that the

^e Polycarp. ad Phil. cap. i.

^f Idem, cap. iii.

apostolical epistles were too obscure to be of use to ordinary Christians; for though he refers continually to the examples of "Paul himself and the rest of the apostles," and to the recent witness borne to the truth by Ignatius, and Zosimus, and Rufus,^s he makes no reference to the oral teaching even of St. Paul, but says, "I trust that ye are well exercised in the Holy Scriptures, and that *nothing is hid from you.*"^h In this last expression Polycarp reminds us of his master, St. John, who says of the Lord's "little children," to whom he wrote, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things."ⁱ It is remarkable too that both the Evangelist and his disciple, in these parallel passages, are rebuking those who had caused divisions in the Church, (perhaps Gnostics,) so that his argument is that they who have the Bible in their hands, and the unction of the Holy One in their hearts, know all things necessary to their salvation, for nothing of essential truth will be hid from lowly and teachable spirits, who are well exercised in the Holy Scriptures.

But we must not pass over the single epistle of

^s Cap. ix.

^h Cap. xii.

ⁱ 1 John ii. 20. See Manning, Rule of Faith, p. 47.—He thinks that "Ye know all things" means that they had received the full oral tradition; see v. 21, 24, 27.

Polycarp without referring for additional information respecting him to the very touching and graphic account of him given by Irenæus, as preserved by Eusebius;^k and I feel the more bound to make this reference because the testimony of Irenæus is supposed to be adverse to the views which it is my object to establish. In the passage to which I refer, Irenæus is opposing the peculiar doctrines of Florinus which were so singular and novel, we are told, that not only were they inconsistent with the doctrine of the Church, but even the heretics out of the Church had not attempted to assert them. Then he adds; "These doctrines were never delivered to thee by the Presbyters before us, those which also were the immediate disciples of the apostles. For I saw thee when I was yet a boy in the Lower Asia with Polycarp. I can tell the very place where the blessed Polycarp was accustomed to sit and discourse. And also his entrance, his walks, the complexion of his life, and the form of his body, and his conversation with the people, and his familiar intercourse with John, as he was accustomed to tell, as also his familiarity with those who had seen the Lord. How also he used to relate their discourses, and what things he had heard from them concerning the Lord. Also

^k Euseb. II. Eccl. v. 20.

concerning his miracles (of Christ), his doctrine, all these were told by Polycarp, *in consistency with Holy Scripture*, as he had received them from the eye-witnesses of the doctrine of salvation." We may regard this interesting passage, and Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians, as mutually illustrating each other; and they combine to teach us that though Polycarp enjoyed singular opportunities for preserving and transmitting the oral teaching of the apostles, yet that not only did he always teach himself in exact "consistency with the Holy Scriptures," but that all his arguments were drawn from that only source of assured and unmingled truth. Irenæus was therefore with justice persuaded that if Florinus had ventured to announce his novel doctrine, so opposed to "the words of the Lord Jesus Christ," in the presence of Polycarp, that aged saint would have stopped his ears, and escaped from the defiling contact of error, in the same spirit which is said to have hurried St. John from the bath which was polluted by the presence of Cerinthus, and which made Polycarp himself not only refuse to return the salutation of Marcion in the streets of Rome, but denounce him as the "first born of Satan."¹ Polycarp was prepared to contend earnestly for the faith *once*

¹ Idem, iv. 14.

delivered to him. He was determined to continue in the things which he had learned, and been assured of, knowing of whom he had learned them,^m even from him who was the beloved disciple of the Lord, who not only had witnessed all that Jesus did and taught, but who had subsequently been led into all truth by the Holy Spirit.

The question is not whether St. John taught Polycarp and Ignatius by word of mouth, or by a written record, but whether the verbal teaching and the written record were co-extensive, and for all practical purposes identical. This question is answered by our finding nothing of Christian teaching in the writings of the Apostolical Fathers which we do not find in the New Testament. We see there no pretensions to any private knowledge ; but on the contrary express disclaimers of any independent authority ; while, as in the passage just referred to from Irenæus, we learn that the teaching of one at least of those holy men exactly coincided with the New Testament. It is important also to observe that the very fact of these early bishops having addressed epistles to Apostolical Churches, without the slightest intimation that those Churches were in possession of a peculiar Christian knowledge, is

^m 2 Tim. iii. 14.

in itself an argument against the theory that the apostolical tradition resided specially in the churches which had an apostle for their founder. And this argument is still further confirmed by our finding that Clement writing to the Corinthians, and Polycarp to the Philadelphians, do not refer to their traditionary knowledge of St. Paul's doctrine—how he “taught in all churches”—but to their possession of his original letters; and that they argue upon all points of faith and practice, just as we should in the present day, referring men to the plain teaching of God's Spirit in the Scripture of Truth.

No doubt the Christians of the first age had a body of Christian truth which they had collected from the Scriptures, and which they regarded as the catholic faith, though the term was not yet adopted, for that was not an age of terminology and system, and the agreement in this body of truth of different Churches, planted at different times and places, and by different Apostles, or other christian teachers, was then, and is now, a powerful confirmation of the identity of the New Testament with the teaching of our Lord, and of his Spirit; and also that the churches thus agreeing had rightly received the teaching of their original founders, and did correctly interpret the Gospels and Epistles which were circu-

lated among them. And these Gospels and Epistles, be it remembered, had been committed to writing by those inspired men who first taught orally in order that the Church might be able to have always in its remembranceⁿ the commandments of the Apostles of its Lord and Saviour,^o and that all might know the certainty of the things in which they had been instructed.^p

As therefore we first teach children orally that they may be the better prepared for self education, and the more accurate investigation of truth in books, or in the phenomena of mind or matter; and as in religious teaching we discipline those by catechetical instruction into whose hands we are about to put the lively oracles of God's revealed will, so was the early Church taught by the Apostles, and then left to mark, learn, and inwardly digest the holy Scriptures, that it might be thus carried on to perfection, and be thoroughly furnished unto every good word and work.

We learn, then, from our review of the Fathers of the Apostolic age, whose writings have come down to us, that they were faithful keepers and witnesses of holy writ; that though they had no formal creeds or confessions among them, and did not confess to have any private traditions received from the Apostles beyond the written

ⁿ 2 Pet. i. 15.

^o 2 Pet. iii. 2.

^p Luke i. 4.

one which we ourselves possess, and assumed no peculiar claim for themselves or their Churches, to be the unerring interpreters of the word of God, yet that there was a remarkable harmony of belief among them, whereby truth within the Church, and error without it, were at once tested and distinguished. This harmony of belief is the more remarkable a witness to that holy writ on which it was founded, and to which it constantly referred, because the Churches at that blessed period rejoiced in Christian liberty. No anti-christian Prelate had yet dared to call himself the Bishop of Bishops, and the living representative of Christ's sovereignty, nor had any Church presumed to usurp the title of the Mother and Mistress of all other Churches. They walked in Christian sisterhood in humility and love towards each other, and in profound reverence and submission to their common Head. It is true that there were heresies and schisms affecting the most vital points of Christian doctrine, and hardly inferior in number to those of our own distracted period, but they were the means by which the Church was purified, and the ideas and language of Christians corrected, for as each separatist went out from the fellowship in which he had no proper part, he taught the faithful brethren the preciousness of the faith which he had renounced,

and made them cling the closer together, in the face of contempt and persecution, in defence of the unity which had been disturbed. We may indeed discover in the state of the Church of the first century some things which we could wish otherwise, for the germs of corruption both in doctrine and discipline manifested themselves at a very early period; and assuredly we learn from the history of the primitive Church that we must never expect that divisions will cease in the Church, when they were so abundant, and on such momentous points, in the age of the Apostles, and of their immediate successors. Still there was hope of union so long as uniformity was not deemed essential to its existence; and of concord, while all moved round the common centre of their invisible, but ever present Head.

It now only remains for us who have fallen on times less happy in this respect, to use our best endeavours to combine the discordant members of Christ's holy catholic Church by a recurrence to those principles of scriptural truth which guided the first age, and by the firm but meek rejection of all human traditions, and the claim of any man, or any body of men, to be the infallible interpreters of Scripture, and the supreme rulers of Christendom; for such usurpation, when a part assumes to be the whole, is of the very

essence of schism. Our great argument is that the faith has been delivered to the saints once for all. Our comfort is that what God has been pleased to communicate he will enable every devout and humble enquirer who uses the means provided by God, to understand, so far at least as is essential to the salvation of his soul, which is the object proposed in the preaching of the Gospel. Our duty is therefore to contend earnestly for what we are assured is the faith thus delivered to the household of faith; being persuaded that man has nothing which he can add to it, and that it contains the record of eternal life for all those by whom it is cordially embraced, and stedfastly maintained.

LECTURE IV.

ON THE

TESTIMONY OF THE FATHERS GENERALLY.*

WE have endeavoured to prove that the Apostolical Fathers, and the Churches over which they presided, or to which they addressed the Epistles which have come down to us, knew nothing of Tradition in the comparatively recent sense of an unwritten word of God, of like authority with Scripture, and of greater practical value as explaining its sense. If this point may be regarded as established, the first link is wanting in the chain of the traditionary system, for we can hardly suppose that those writers who so freely quoted the written documents of the Evangelists and Apostles, would not have referred to their private and supplemental oral communications, had any such existed.

Let us, however, proceed to take a wider view

* The text to this Sermon is wanting in the author's MS.

of the general history of the Church, and enquire whether, in point of fact, the doctrine and discipline of the Church were constructed in the first instance, and defended afterwards from the assaults of heretics, by a reference to tradition and authority, or by an appeal to the supreme, infallible, and independent authority of Scripture.

It will, of course, be impossible, within the limits of a single discourse, to enter with any minuteness of detail into such a subject, but it will be my object to bring before you a few prominent points on which this whole question turns, and by which a judgment may be formed of its general bearing. These shall be—

1st. The Creeds.

2nd. The Controversies.

3rd. The Councils of the Church.

1.—The Creeds. If there is anywhere an Apostolical Tradition of concurrent authority with Scripture it must be in the Creeds, for these are the only early documents in which the faith of the Church, at least during the ante-nicene period, was contained, and put forth with anything which bore even the semblance of authority.

There are, however, one or two circumstances connected with the Creeds which will at once dispose of their claim to be received as the depositories of an oral tradition of the Apostles.

We have already seen that the writings of the immediate successors of the Apostles which have come down to us, not only do not contain any Creeds, but that they do not refer to any authorized summaries of the faith as existing in the Church. This fact alone is sufficient to overturn the idle legend of Ruffinus,^a that what we call the Apostles' Creed was the joint composition of the Twelve, each of whom contributed an article. It may, however, be further shewn,

a. In the first place, from the construction of the early Creeds which we meet with in subsequent writers, and from their variety, that they could not have been derived from the personal teaching of the Apostles, and that they did not in fact lay claim to such an origin.

With regard to the construction of the early Creeds it may be sufficient to refer you to those which are contained in the controversial treatises of Irenæus and Epiphanius, the simple perusal of which will convince any one who is capable of forming a judgment in such matters, and is willing to admit conviction, that they are simple summaries of the contents of the New Testament. After a confession of faith in the Trinity, they state the main facts of the Gospel history; as the incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascen-

^a Expos. in Symb. § 2.

sion of our Lord, and then branch out into diffuse quotations from Scripture respecting Christian doctrines. They do not profess to guide the faith of the Church, but simply assert what it is, and adopting the very words of Scripture, distinctly manifest the source from which they were derived.

And even were it otherwise, the variety of the Creeds is of itself fatal to their pretension to be received as an apostolical document. The very expression *the Creed* involves a fallacy, for it is well known that there were almost as many Creeds as Churches, in the first five centuries,^r hardly any two of which exactly agreed with each other, or with the one which the western Churches finally adopted. Nor is this merely a difference of expression which might be consistent with a similar tradition, but articles are contained in some which are omitted in this, as for instance that of the descent into hell, which clearly implies a various interpretation of a well known passage in St. Peter.^s In addition to which we may observe that another article, that, namely, respecting the “holy Catholic Church,” is supposed to have been

^r One hundred and seven are enumerated :—vid. Walchius’s *Biblioth. Symbolica*. [A very full list of authorities on the subject of the Apostles’ Creed is given by Hagenbach, *Hist. of Doctrines*, i. 39. Engl. Trans.—Ed.]

^s 1 Pet. iii. 19.

added by Augustine: but he who added an article, and they who received it, could not have regarded the Creed as of apostolical origin, or divine authority: and in point of fact Augustine expressly declares that the Creed was a summary of Scripture, and was not derived from an independent oral Tradition:^t

b. In the next place, we may observe, that even if the Creed could be traced to the Apostles, it would not enlarge the bounds of traditionary teaching, for it contains no doctrines which we do not find on the very surface of Scripture. It does not fix the sense of any passage of Scripture, except it be in the case of the clause respecting the descent into hell already referred to, which is confessedly the addition of a later age; nor does it determine any of the great controversies which have from time to time agitated the Church. The very existence of the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds is decisive on this point, and their reception by the Church tends also to prove that none of the Creeds previously received were regarded as summaries of the unwritten word of God derived by Tradition from the Apostles.

c. It may be urged, and has in fact been urged, that although the Creed may be traced to Scrip-

^t Aug. de Symb. Ad Catech. c. 1.

ture, and contains nothing which we do not find in Scripture, yet that it is a divinely appointed complement to the written word, which is rendered necessary by the imperfection of human reason. It is granted that if individual Christians could certainly understand all Scripture, or if Churches, that is collective Christians, could infallibly explain the Bible, nothing now would be wanting, because the "Law of the Lord is perfect," but [it is urged] that it cannot "make wise the simple" unless an interpreter is added, and that therefore the Holy Ghost inspired the Creed that the interpretation might not be wanting.

In this view of the subject there are several assumptions: first, the necessity of an infallible interpreter, of which we shall have more to say hereafter: secondly, the fact that the Creed really does interpret the Bible, on which any plain man may form his own opinion by referring to the notorious circumstance that not only the Churches of England, and of Rome, and of Greece, receive it, but that almost every protestant sect would acknowledge it to be a faithful summary of Christian doctrines: and, thirdly, that either the Creed claims for itself, or that the early Church claimed for it, a divine, and therefore infallible authority; on which point we need only refer to the com-

ments on the Creed up to that of Salvian in the 5th century.

2.—Thus then we see that the Creeds, which contain the positive assertion of the Christian faith, were clearly derived from Scripture and not from tradition. Let us, secondly, proceed to enquire how the faith was maintained, negatively, in the controversies which were carried on with the heretics by whom the peace of the Church was disturbed, and its purity endangered.

In instituting this enquiry, I propose to refer, and that very briefly, to those of the Fathers who have written upon the heresies of their time, and are generally quoted by Romanists, and others, in defence of the authority of tradition, and shall aim at illustrating their theoretical opinions, practically, by the manner in which they conducted the controversies in which they were respectively engaged.

The writers to whom I refer are Irenæus, Tertullian, Epiphanius, Augustine, and Vincentius Lirinensis, to whom some others might be added; but these will be sufficient for our purpose.

It is perfectly true, then, that these writers speak as follows:—

I. Irenæus in his treatise against heresies in general, but especially against the gnostic heresies of his day, says, we must oppose to their

secret and private tradition the public tradition and doctrine of the Universal Church.^u This Church, he proceeds to say, is the gate of life. All others are thieves and robbers whom we must shun, but love what belongs to the tradition, and embrace the tradition of truth. If there is a dispute on any small matter, must we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches, in which the Apostles ministered (*conversati sunt*) and learn the truth from them? Even if the Apostles had not left us the Scriptures (or any writings) ought we not to follow the tradition which they delivered to those to whom they committed the Churches? This course of proceeding is recommended to us by barbarous nations, (who are in the position in which the Church would have been if it had not possessed the Scriptures,) for they believe in Christ without the aid of ink and paper, having the righteousness of God written in their hearts by the Spirit, and so keeping the ancient tradition, they believe in one God the maker of heaven and earth, and of all things therein, by Jesus Christ the Son of God. Thus through *that ancient tradition of the Apostles*, they do not admit into their minds a thought of any of the monstrous doctrines of the heretics.^x

^u Iren. adv. Hær. iii, 2, 3.

^x Ib. iii. 4; Goode's Divine Rule, ii. 284; Hagenbach. i. § 34.

On these passages we might observe, in the first place, that the whole is an argument *a fortiori*. He is shewing what we might do if we had not Scripture; and he expressly tells us that he introduces this argument of tradition because the heretics must be resisted not only by Scripture, but in every way, and by all means. But the most important point to observe is that his tradition relates to the actual teaching of the Apostles; and that he assumes its perfect identity with the written record which we actually possess of that teaching. He tells us that what the Apostles preached, THAT they afterwards, by the will of God, delivered to us in the Scriptures, to be the foundation and pillar of our faith.^y There is in all that he says no notion of anything supplemental to the apostolical gospels and epistles, still less modifying or correcting them, for this was the very error of the Gnostics against which he was contending. Both the Church and the heretics had the Scriptures which were received by all as authentic, but the heretics boasted that they had a private esoteric doctrine in addition, while the Church asserted that it had an universally received doctrine which strictly coincided with the simple exoteric teaching of the Apostles as contained in the Scriptures. Take away then,

^y Iren. adv. Hær. iii. 1; Goode, ii. 287.

for the sake of argument, the Scriptures which are the part common to both, and the comparison will lie between the secret and particular tradition of the heretics, and the public and general tradition of the Church. This is, I believe, a simple explanation of the meaning of Irenæus ; and that it is so is further confirmed by the fact that his main argument with these heretics, his body of proof, so to speak, is all along derived from the Scriptures both of the Old Testament and the New, and none of the heretics even pretended to have a tradition which reached back into the Old Testament : but it is important always to bear in mind that whatever authority we give to tradition in one dispensation will also be applicable to the other.

It may, however, be said that this defence of the simple minded Irenæus will not apply to the subtle and vehement Tertullian, who has a treatise written expressly to shew that heretics are to be met by the argument of prescription.

Without quoting, at length, from the well-known treatise,^y we may acknowledge the argument of Tertullian to be that, the Scriptures are the possession of the Church ; and that when heretics leave the Church, they do as it were leave the Bible behind them, and have no right to put their sense upon a book which is not

^y De Præscriptione adv. Hæret.

theirs, and for the interpretation of which they have no legitimate key. The Church can say, we received these writings, and doctrines which are coincident with their plain teaching (for he no where speaks of a secret and additional doctrine) from those who went before us, and they in continuous succession from the Apostles. Can you shew any tradition of doctrine which will terminate in the same point, and if we trace back your peculiar doctrines shall we not find that they were originally derived, through Marcian, &c., from Simon Magus? There may be difficulty in discussing particular texts of Scripture, and the various readings which the corrupt text of the heretics contains, and the issue of such a discussion will always be more or less uncertain, but while we have this compendious argument (as Tertullian expressly calls it)² of Præscription, we need look no further, and should be very unwise to relinquish the vantage ground we occupy by descending to the common level of Scriptural discussion.

I believe this to be a fair statement of the argument of Tertullian, and candidly confess that I do not think that it can be altogether defended on the principles of the Church of England. We must, however, bear in mind the time and cir-

² Adv. Hermog. c. i. p. 233.

cumstances in which the treatise in question was written. An argument derived from the tradition of doctrine which was valid, and perhaps irresistible, in the 2nd century, will have lost all its cogency in the 19th : and reasoning which was applicable to men who professed to have a mystical doctrine transmitted through private hands, and distinct from the teaching of the apostles, most of whom were assumed to be imperfectly instructed in the mystery of godliness, will hardly be applicable to the controversies among Christians of the present day, which turn rather on the meaning of Scripture than on the hands through which it has been transmitted. At the same time we must confess that if any one body of Christians can prove itself to be *the Church*, as the Church of Rome claims to do, they may consistently employ the argument of Tertullian for what it is worth. But the real test of its value is to be ascertained by the actual conduct of Tertullian : and when we find him, notwithstanding this compendious formula of defence against heretics, arguing with them, as is notoriously the case throughout his works, from Scripture, so nearly to the exclusion of every other plea, that only two passing allusions to the argument from tradition can be discovered in the

whole of his voluminous writings,^a and these capable of an easy explanation, we cannot assign much weight to the ingenious, but rhetorical argument of a single treatise. When, however, we look beyond his writings to his life, and remember that this rejector of those without the pale of the Church from the free use of Scripture in controversy, excluded himself from that pale, and all the privileges connected with it, by embracing Montanism; and from his position without the Church denounced those within as “carnal, having not the spirit,” however we may admire the original genius and subtle eloquence of Tertullian, we cannot bow to his authority, and may rather quote his example to prove the inefficacy of the argument from prescription and tradition.

Another Father who has written expressly on heresies, and the manner in which they are to be refuted, is Epiphanius, and as he flourished late in the 4th century, when the Church system had acquired considerable consistency, his testimony is of some weight, if it can be shewn, as I believe it can, that notwithstanding the occasional employment of the argument from tradition against the heretics, he recognized no other source of the faith but Scripture, and appeals to its plain meaning for the solution of all

^a De Corona, cc. 3, 4, and Adv. Marc. i. c. 21; iii. c. 1.

difficulties, and the establishment of every doctrine.

There is a detached passage in this Father frequently quoted by Romanists in what appears to me to be a most dishonest manner : that, namely, in which he says that we must use tradition also, because all things cannot be gathered from Scripture. “Wherefore the holy Apostles delivered some things by writing, and some by tradition : according to what St. Paul says, “As I delivered unto you.”^b The simple explanation of this passage is that he is talking of ecclesiastical ordinances, such as celibacy, fasting, and the like, which he says are not laid down in Scripture, but are enjoined on the authority of the Church ; and though he claims for them an apostolical origin, he carefully distinguishes between them and the more sacred mysteries, as he calls them, such as the two sacraments “which are to be observed according as the tradition of the Gospel and the Apostles direct.”^c

Epiphanius draws as clear a line of distinction as the Church of England herself between what “the undivided Catholic Church holds respecting the faith,” which, he says, “is taken from the divine Scriptures;” and “the laws of the Church

^b Epiph. de Hær. Apostol. 61, § 6.

^c Goode ii. 387 ; Adv. Hær. Expos. Fid. Cath. § 22.

which are observed, some by command, and others by a voluntary reception.”^d When he sums up the Christian faith, he says, “This the Church believes as she has *received* and *been ordered*,”^e that is, from Scripture ; and when he uses the word tradition in reference to matters of faith, he means the doctrine actually transmitted through the prophets, evangelists, and apostles, and not any vague unwritten report of their teaching.

That this is his meaning may be proved by the manner in which he treats the numerous heresies of which he gives an account. He pleads that the test of sound reason is not the imagining of the heretics, but the plain teaching of Scripture. Having drawn up their errors in array, he declares his intention of bringing against each phrase and chapter refutatory arguments from the divine Scripture, and from right reason, and from logical questionings. Proofs from the divine Scripture and pious reasonings are the weapons he professes to wield, and he challenges the submission of all men, with a pious mind and sincere confidence, to that which the Holy Spirit teaches through the holy Scriptures ; and he rejects the notions of the Valentinians as idle

^d Goode ii. 326, 383, 386.

^e Epiph. Adv. Hær. c. xviii. p. 1100.

fables, and destitute of confirmation, “because the Scriptures nowhere mentioned them, neither the Law of Moses, nor any prophet of those who came after Moses, nor, moreover, the Saviour, nor his evangelists, nor the apostles.” For, he says, if these things were true, the Lord, and the prophets, and the apostles, would have *declared* them to us *plainly*.^f This is his constant language, and it is quite sufficient to shew what he means when he speaks of the faith of the undivided Catholic Church, what those points are which can alone be deduced from tradition, and that Scripture is the source of truth, and the rule of faith, and that the illumination of God’s spirit is the faithful teacher of the truth contained in Holy Writ, of which the Church is only the keeper and witness, so that he says the Church is known by Scripture, not Scripture by the Church, and even miracles do not prove that the Church is true, for they derive all their value from being performed in a true Church ; in confirmation of which he observes, that after our Lord had risen from the dead, he still referred the disciples to what was written in Moses and the Psalms to prove that he was the Christ.^g

The general authority of Augustine is so decidedly on this side, that it would not have been

^f Hær § 51 ; Valent. § 34 ; Goode ii. 384, 5. ^g Luke xxiv. 44.

necessary to refer to him but for a single epistle written against what was called the Fundamental Epistle of Manichæus. Unhappily for the interests of truth in this and in many similar cases, we do not possess the heretical writings to which the Catholic Fathers were replying ; but we may collect from what Augustine says, that Manichæus was regarded as the Paraclete, just as Montanus had been before him, and that his claim to this impious title was supported by the authority of Scripture. Now it is quite clear that no text of Scripture could be adduced asserting that Manichæus was himself the Paraclete who was to be expected by the Church. The utmost that could be derived from Scripture would be, and that a most unsound deduction, that the Paraclete was distinct from the Holy Ghost, and that after the outpouring of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, a Paraclete, (and why not many ?) might be expected by the Church to teach, to comfort, to strengthen, and guide the faithful, leading them into all truth. Now it is clear that such a notion was subversive of all fixedness of belief ; so that the teaching of Scripture might itself be superseded by the plenary teaching, the more developed doctrines of Montanus, Manichæus, and in after times of Mahomet ; for he too was regarded as a Paraclete

by his followers. In this case Augustine had to contend with a pretension to a new revelation, recognizing the generally received scripture as the basis of his pretensions,^h but practically superseding the Bible by the new doctrine for which an inspired authority was claimed.

His answer to these pretensions was that the very authority on which the canonicity of the Bible rested was fatal to the attempt of Manichæus to prove from the Bible that a Paraclete was yet to be expected by the Church, and that he fulfilled the conditions of the prophecy so that he was the promised Comforter. Augustine proves the canonicity of Scripture elsewhere by reference to as many Catholic Churches as possible, especially those over which apostles had presided, and to which apostolical epistles had been addressed. And so completely is this reference a question of evidence, that he admits the dangerous principle of a greater or less degree of weight attaching to the different books of the New Testament, in proportion as they had been received by the greater number of Churches, and by those of most dignity and authority. Hence he comes to the conclusion, expressed

^h [Only, I believe, the New Testament, adding to this the Apocryphal Gospels. The authorities on this point are collected by Gieseler, *Eccl. Hist.* i. 226, 7. (Dr. Davidson's Translation.)—ED.]

perhaps in an unguarded manner, that he would not believe the Gospel, if the authority of the Catholic Church did not move him to do so: that is to say, if he did not find that the Gospel had been received by Christians as a faithful record of what Jesus did and taught—if it appeared now for the first time, or having appeared before had been rejected by Christians, who derived their ideas of Christianity from other sources; or not having been rejected, had nevertheless remained inoperative, with no signs of vital power, giving life to those who read it, and forming the Church, as it were, around itself; in this case the Gospel would have no claims upon his reverential submission and belief.

He then applies this rule to test the analogous claims of the Manichæans. You, he says, profess to have a new revelation, or at least an inspired development of the doctrines contained in that which you, in common with us, have already received. Remember then, that the claims of the new revelation must rest upon similar grounds to those on which we have submitted to the teaching of our common Bible; and if we would not receive the Bible if it were a recent discovery, or if it had never been recognized by Christians as the authentic document of their faith, so the novelty of your interpretation of the promises relating to

the Paraclete, which has never been received by any Christian from the beginning, is conclusive against its truth, and the claims of Manichæus to be the Paraclete, while he is at the same time excluding himself from the fellowship of the Catholic Church, which has been formed by the teaching of the Bible, and in whose custody it has ever been, are so preposterous, that this circumstance alone is sufficient to condemn them, without any special discussion of the passages of Scripture which are alleged by him or his followers.

This is the same argument, in effect, as that used by Tertullian in the treatise which we have already noticed, and in the commonitorium of Vincentius Lirinensis, to which an interest beyond its intrinsic merits, or the personal weight of its author, has attached from the recent controversies in the course of which it has been often quoted. I would throw these treatises together, and we might add to them those of Irenæus and Epiphanius, for the sake of applying to them the common remark that their argument as far as it goes is a ^{*}negative rather than a positive one, and that this argument is resorted to almost exclusively to refute *recent* heresies.

I am not prepared to defend the argument

which runs through these treatises, and shall have occasion in my next lecture to shew that the Church of England takes much sounder and safer ground, but my present object is to prove that even this rhetorical formula by which it was thought that all heretics could be at once disposed of, falls short of the dangerous theory that we are to receive our views of Christian truth from tradition, and refer to the Bible only for their illustration or support.

Throughout these treatises it is assumed that the whole body of Christian doctrine is contained in the Bible, and can alone be deduced from it, but as the test of the accuracy and faithfulness of the doctrinal deductions brought forward by any one it is asked whether they are such as have always been received by the universal Church. There is a wide practical distinction between a scripturally proved tradition, and scriptural teaching tested by tradition, that is, between tradition teaching positively and testing negatively, and tradition employed only to reject what is new, and therefore unauthorized. For instance if we take the case of the cardinal doctrine of the Deity of our Lord, we should find the positive evidence of Christian writers in the first two centuries silent in some cases, and doubtful in others ; but it was an important con-

firmation of the true doctrine as received and declared by the Fathers in the Council of Nice, that what Scripture appeared to them to teach distinctly had been held by those who went before them, and that no Christian Church had ever taught the contrary doctrine.

So also with regard to the canon of Scripture, though the canon could not be constructed by this rule, for we receive books which have not always been universally received, it is a sufficient argument against the Apocrypha to shew that, up to a comparatively recent date, it had never been received by the Church of God.

Accordingly we find this argument adopted as a short and easy method to silence heretics as they successively appeared, to whom it was deemed sufficient to say, "You are of yesterday, therefore you are wrong." Whether it was a sufficient argument, even to this extent, it is beyond our present purpose to enquire, for the question before us is simply whether the Fathers recognised the supreme and independent authority of Scripture, or whether they maintained the existence of an unwritten word of God, by which the written word was to be authoritatively explained. The very use of such an argument as the one we are discussing implies that there was no living authority in the Church to decide

controversies, and is altogether inconsistent with the theory of development, for it would be an answer to each developed doctrine to shew that it had not been received everywhere, always, and by all. When, therefore, we find Vincentius Lirinensis, the last Church writer who has given a formal expression to this argument, acknowledging that it is applicable only to recent heresies, we have a key to the sense in which it was used by him, and in a modified form by the earlier Fathers, and learn that it was deemed sufficient only to refute novel errors, but insufficient to establish truth ; and thus interpreted and modified it is a theory clearly inconsistent with the idea of an infallible authority within the Church, and still more with the doctrine of development which assumes that what was not received by the Church of a former age, may yet be absolutely binding, as God's own truth, on the Church of the present day.

It may however be thought that though the Creed may be shewn to be only a compendium of Scripture, and that the doctrine of universal consent is an hypothesis rather destructive of error than constructive of truth, yet that œcumenical councils may be deemed to express the sense of the Universal Church, and to determine

infallibly the sense of Scripture on all points ruled by them.

Let us shortly examine this point by a reference to the Council of Nice, to which the greatest weight and authority has ever been attached by the Catholic Church.

In the first place we may observe that this the first general council (if we except the assembly of the Apostles and Elders and Brethren at Jerusalem)¹ was not held till A.D. 325, so that during three most critical centuries, when the ecclesiastical system was in the course of formation, the Church had never spoken in its corporate capacity.

In the next place we must bear in mind that this council, convoked and presided over by an Emperor not yet baptized, was attended by only three hundred and eighteen Prelates,^k and of these only a comparatively small number were of what is now called the Western or Latin Church. How far such a council may be taken to represent Christ's Holy Catholic Church, that is the body of Christian people scattered throughout the whole world, may well be doubted. But even assuming that it did so represent them, it is clear from

¹ Acts xv. 6.

^k [According to the highest calculation ; others give 250 and 300 as the number.—ED.]

the narrative of Eusebius that the assembled Bishops did not presume to think that they spoke with infallible authority. Each gave what he thought to be the true meaning of Scripture, and the assembly, while it denounced the Arian doctrine as unscriptural and novel, shewed with what scrupulosity it adhered to the very language of Scripture, by defending the word which the subtlety of heretics constrained it to employ, on the ground that though the word itself was not in any passage of the Bible, the sense was every where. This was the line of defence taken by its immortal advocate Athanasius, and certainly when he stood alone for the truth against the world, the argument of universal consent would have been little to his purpose.¹ Athanasius refers to the Council simply as evidence of the opinion of so many Fathers, carrying with it no light authority, but his apology for the use of an expression not contained in the Bible, and his elaborate scriptural defence of the doctrine of the Trinity, proves that in his opinion the decision of a Council was not an absolute end of all strife. Even at a later period, Augustine,^m defending the same doctrine against the Arians

¹ Athan. de decr. Syn. Nic. § 20, 36. Fid. Expos. Opp. tom. i. p. 79, § 1, 3, 4.

^m De Trinit. passim.

of his day, still appeals to the Supreme authority of Scripture, and acknowledges that not even a Council could set the question at rest for ever, for if the Council of Nice should be quoted on one side, that of Ariminum, attended by a much larger number of Bishops, might be alleged on the other.

What a Council had ruled, an Emperor might make binding, so that all who did not receive its decrees were excommunicated and ejected from their benefices, but this did not in after times settle all disputes on the points so ruled even by those who were in communion with the Church, and hardly any one now would consider it sufficient when maintaining the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father, to quote the decision of the Council of Nice, though he might refer to the Canon of that Council as of very grave authority in the question. We do not practically believe the doctrine because of the Canon, but we are confirmed by the authority of the Canon in our reception of a doctrine which we believe to rest on most certain warrant of God's written word. Thus Creeds, Fathers, and Councils, may be helpers of our joy, assuring us that the glad tidings of salvation which we gather from the Bible are really contained there, but they must not have such dominion over our faith as to su-

persede the duty of patient and humble enquiry, the exercise of our own proper judgment, and the instruction of an intelligent belief, the result of personal conviction. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God;"ⁿ and that is not faith, in the Scriptural sense of the term, which rests merely on any human authority, however entitled to our deferential respect, and is not derived from the study of the word of God.

We shall of course be met here by the old argument that all this painful investigation, and anxious enquiry, is not only a very troublesome process, but that it implies more intellectual power and leisure than falls to the lot of most men, and that even those who are able to investigate religious subjects come to very different, and even opposite conclusions, so that we never can hope for certainty, or unity, unless we have some infallible judge in religious controversies.

We fully acknowledge the truth of this remark. If there is to be uniformity of belief, or rather of profession, for belief cannot be coerced, there must be an infallible judge. All must feel what repose such an unerring authority offers to the mind, but the question is whether we are warranted to expect it, and whether it is in fact pos-

ⁿ Rom. x. 17.

sessed by the Church. We discover in the New Testament no provision for a court of absolute authority in matters of faith, and practically we do not find that there is such absolute agreement with Scripture or with each other, in the decisions of councils or churches, as to lead us to suppose that they were infallible. Besides which, even if we were prepared to acknowledge an infallible authority somewhere, a great many questions might still be raised respecting the seat of infallibility, which even the Church of Rome has not yet solved, and which are at least as difficult of solution as the plain letter of the New Testament.

From all this there is the strongest presumption that it was not God's design that we should have such absolute certainty, but that the difficulties connected with religious enquiry should remain for the trial of our faith, and the exercise of those graces of patience, humility, and child-like dependence which they are calculated to elicit. But if such was the design of God, we may be assured that resisting his will in this respect, and rebelling against his wise and loving dispensation, must be productive of manifold and great evils. Let me then in conclusion, remind you what a pregnant source of false doctrine, heresy, and schism, this desire for absolute cer-

tainty in religious matters has proved to the Church.

This was the real origin of the Gnostic theory which, even before it had led to its heretical and semi-pagan development in the hands of Valentinian and others, had corrupted the simplicity of the Gospel by introducing artificial senses of Scripture under the idea that the hidden meaning of the Bible had been revealed to only three of the Apostles, and was derived from them by a chosen few—a sort of intellectual election—made capable by God's special and predestinating favour of receiving those doctrines which the multitude even of Christians could neither comprehend nor receive. This elect body was therefore the Gnostic seat of infallibility, and thus the desire after certain truth of intellectual speculators was met and satisfied—but the fruit of the tree of knowledge did not prove the source of spiritual life. The Bible teaches us that spiritual knowledge is the result of the progress which the Christian makes in the life of love, but Gnosticism regarded knowledge as an end, and correct views of doctrine as the meritorious cause of salvation, rather than the consequence and issue of a holy walk with God. Nor is it in Gnosticism only that we discover this over estimate of abstract doctrinal accuracy, for we are all too apt

to forget that religion is rather a divine life than a divine science, and to lose sight of the end, which is conformity to the [Divine] likeness, while we rest satisfied with intellectual speculations.^o

In minds, however, of a less ideal, and more practically earnest kind, the same desire for an authoritative teacher, for some great mystagogue who would substitute certainty for doubt, and repose for excitement, will seek for the resolution of cases of conscience, for information beyond what sacred scripture contains respecting the present discipline, and future expectation of the Church, and for some rule of life by which not only shall the Church be separated from the world, but one Christian shall be raised above another in spiritual attainment. This is more than a natural desire, for it is one which the child of God will feel, and therefore is the temptation arising from this source the more subtle. Yet when we bear in mind that the temptations to which our blessed Lord was exposed were intimately connected with his Sonship, and were just such as God's children are especially called to undergo, we need

^o [Beyond this point, the first draft only exists of the sermon, which, it will be seen, entirely wants a conclusion. It is doubtful whether the matter here presented was intended to have been included within the limits of one discourse, but it was thought advisable to give it so far as it presented a continuous argument.—ED.]

not be surprised if we find that the longings of a convinced and troubled spirit for guidance and rest, and the efforts of a Christian athlete to gain the highest prize, have been themselves perverted to evil by the tempter of the brethren. In such feelings as those, we have every reason to suppose, the errors of the Montanists originated. They thought that the body of those around them who professed and called themselves Christians, were languid, conformed to the world, and falling very far short of the Gospel standard; or, if not of the standard of the Gospel as distinctly enunciated, at least of the spirit which became a child of God and an heir of glory. If you add to this the idea of the inherent evil of matter, a Gnostic notion which comes up to the surface in a thousand forms in the history of early Christianity, you have the state of feeling in which Montanism originated, or at least the *nidus*, so to speak, in which it germinated.

The remarkable fact that a sect formed in Phrygia, by the excited ravings of an Asiatic preacher, and two formal followers,^p should have mastered the vivid intellect of such a man as Tertullian, though he had previously written in the most orthodox manner against them, and have formed a sect which spread from the east to the

^p Neander, K. Gesch. i. 870, folg.

west, from Asia to Europe, and from Europe to Africa, and which Epiphanius^a reports to be in existence in his day, two hundred and ninety years after the death of Montanus, shews that it must have touched some chord with which our common feelings vibrate, and that a doctrine so acceptable and so influential, met wants which the human heart earnestly longs to have supplied. Church history never can be understood if we pass lightly over the sects and heresies which have from time to time arisen, or simply condemn them without considering what good thing, what vital principle, gave them origin, and enabled them to rule over the minds of men for a season. Montanism told Christians how they might be perfect, and probably also revealed the time and place of the descent of the New Jerusalem out of heaven. The teacher of this new doctrine, and the revealer of this hidden mystery, went about every where rebuking the worldliness of the visible Church,—and where has it not needed such a rebuke?—and calling on those who desired to win a heavenly crown, to come forth to a life of mortification and self denial. This teaching of Montanus was confirmed by two ladies of station and wealth, who wrapt into extacy, and carried beyond themselves, declared that the

^a Epiph. Hæres. 44, § 4.

Paraclete was incarnate in Montanus and spake by them—the teacher of a more blessed and exalted doctrine than had been taught by Christ or his disciples—who were only under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, a different and inferior agent. In all this there was exactly that mixture of real truth and specious error which in all ages of the Church has been the staple out of which Satan has woven his tissue of deceit, but the point to which I am anxious to advert in the present instance, is, that the immediate effect produced by this preaching so blinded men to its injurious tendency that the Bishop of Rome gave the Montanists letters of peace; and Tertullian had no idea of becoming even a sectary when he embraced their views, though at length he found himself in a state of spiritual exaltation which the narrow pale of the Catholic Church was insufficient to contain. So he, who had held that all who left the Church stood self-condemned, and were not to be reasoned with out of sacred scripture, standing without that pale, denounced those within as carnal worldlings, listened to a teaching which superseded the limited instruction of the written word—as food only for babes—and at length, following out the ascetic views of the Christian life which he had adopted from the Montanists, became himself the leader of a sect

of which Augustine tells us that in his day there was a single Basilica at Carthage which had recently been delivered up to the Catholic Church.^r

How full of instruction is this whole story, especially when we compare it with the origin, the development, and the issue of Gnosticism. The Gnostic obtaining authoritative interpretation by a rationalistic tradition, the Montanist obtaining an infallible guide by direct inspiration, but both explaining away, or superseding the written word, and leaving the Church practically to human guidance. And there is also this remarkable point of coincidence in these sects, that Gnosticism in its Manichæan form, fell into the very error of the Montanists, and regarded Manichæus as an Apostle of Christ, and an incarnation of the Paraclete. Indeed, if it would not take us too far from our subject, we might shew that Mohammed was regarded in the same light by his followers, and his mission also was to protest against, to denounce, and to punish the carnality, idolatry, saint worship, and multitudinous corruptions of the Church at the beginning of the seventh century. So that in both these cases the radical evil was that with a view to promote a good end, and for a time at least with a degree of beneficial result, an authority other than that

^r Aug. Hæres. 86. See Neander. K. G. i. 1153.

of the plain word of God in its simple meaning was introduced, and having been introduced, led eventually to the most pernicious results; but as we have seen in the case of Gnosticism, may we see in that of Montanism, that when once the Church was awake to the danger, the only proper remedy was perceived to be not the simply setting up the counter authority of the Church, (for her character was impugned, and her authority set at nought,) but upholding the supremacy of Holy Scripture as the rule of faith and practice.

So when Tertullian, before his perversion, would expose the errors of the Cataphrygians, (as the Montanists were then called,) he represents in strong language the enormity of their pretensions, that the Paraclete had spoken more truths, and of greater importance, by Montanus and Priscilla and Maximilla, than by Christ and his disciples: thus pointing out what will ever be the effect of admitting the infallible authority of any living teacher, namely that his instructions bearing as they will directly on the daily circumstances of actual life, not merely laying down broad principles as Holy Scripture does, but going into the details of conduct, speaking when Holy Scripture is silent, and bringing out into full light what the Bible designedly left in obscurity, will always be preferred by those who receive it to

the letter of God's word; for the mind of man is always seeking rest and certainty, so that even the promise of repose is tempting. In other passages Tertullian tells us plainly enough what was his opinion of the supremacy of Holy Scripture, when he uses that memorable expression, "Adoro plenitudinem Scripturæ,"^a (like Cyprian's "divinæ plenitudinis fontes"^b) and goes on to quote Rev. xxii. 19. as applying to any one who should bring in doctrines which were not simply taken from Holy Writ. He calls the Bible (when quoting one of the Apostolical Epistles) the voice of God.^c "He who hears them will find God; he who seeks to understand them, will be compelled also to believe."^d He speaks of the reading of the Bible as the excitement of faith, and the refreshment of the soul.^e It is true that in his celebrated treatise, *De Præscriptione adversus Hæreticos*, he refers much to the body of truth held by the Church as a compendious argument against all heretics,^f yet in his practical discussion with heretics his appeal is, not to the authority of the Church, but simply to Holy Scripture: as, for example, where he says, "take from the heretics what they have in common

^a Tert. adv. Hermog. c. xxii. p. 241.

^b Cypr. adv. Jud. præf. p. 18. see further Hagenbach. Hist. Doctr. i. 77. (Eng. Transl.)

^c Apol. cap. 31 ^d Ibid. ^e Apol. cap. 18. ^f Ad. Uxor ii. 6.

with the Pagans, and let them bring the points at issue to the simple test of Holy Scripture," and the same remark will apply to the whole character of his writings against heretics.^a

^a [Of the rest of the Lectures nothing exists but memoranda, and scattered sentences, in a state totally unfit to meet the public eye. Of the matter given above, some, it will be seen, had been in the author's second draft, interwoven into the earlier part of the discourse ; but it would have been difficult to separate, and it seemed better, therefore, to give a simple impression of the MS.—Ed.]

TWO SERMONS

ON THE

INFLUENCES

OF THE

HOLY SPIRIT.

SERMON I.

JOHN xiv. 17.

He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

IN order that we may render unto God intelligent thanksgiving for the grace conferred on his universal Church, which we this day commemorate, it is essential that we have distinct views of what was the nature and extent of that grace.

We should inquire, with a view to this end,

1.—In what manner and degree the Holy Spirit was present with the Church before the special effusion on the day of Pentecost.

2.—What gift was then communicated.

3.—What is our present and personal interest in that gift.

This at least we know, that God will give his Holy Spirit to those that ask him; and we are bound, as at all times, so more especially when our inquiry is respecting the spiritual aid and comfort which He has promised to bestow, de-

voutly to implore Him to pour upon us such an “unction from the Holy One” that we may know all that he has revealed on this important subject.

1.—When then we speak of the Holy Spirit as having been given to the Church on the feast of Pentecost, which followed the return of our Lord to glory, the first inquiry which suggests itself is, What was the state of the Church from the beginning to that day of Pentecost?

The second verse of Genesis tells us of the presence and personal operation of the Holy Spirit moving upon the face of the chaotic waters, as the author and giver of order, and light, and life. Even the Jewish commentators^a on this verse say, “This is the Spirit of King Messiah, concerning whom it is written, ‘And there shall rest on him the Spirit of the Lord,’”^b shewing, even according to their view, the identity between the creating Spirit which worked in the beginning, and the renewing Spirit which now restores the works of God which sin had defaced. “As in the work of the days he breathed light upon the face of matter, so his sabbath work ever since has been the illumination of his chosen.” He alone is “the author and giver of life.” Therefore, wherever the light of spiritual life has illuminated man’s soul, or given him wisdom and

^a See Schoettgenius, *Horæ Hebraicæ*, &c.

^b Isa. xi. 2.

skill to do the work of God, there we discover the operation of the Holy Spirit. Hence we learn that those "holy men of old," by whom God made known to us his will in the Sacred Scripture of truth, "wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."^c If Abel, in the exercise of faith, offered an acceptable sacrifice, that very faith must have been the gift of God's Spirit, so teaching him things to come that he rejoiced "to see the day" of "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and he saw it, and was glad."

If Enoch and Noah walked with God, and found favour in his sight, they must have been led in that holy path by the Spirit of God; or they could not have pleased Him; they could not have been his sons, nor heirs of the righteousness which is by faith; for "whatever the righteous do, they do by the Holy Spirit," according to the remarkable sentiment of the Jewish commentator to whom I have already referred.

When God commissioned Moses to lead his people out of Egypt, the encouraging promise given to him was, "My presence^d shall go with thee:" and Moses answered, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence."^e This

^c 2 Peter i. 21.

^d The expression "The presence of God," appears to imply some special manifestation of God. See Gen. iii. 8; iv. 6; Jon. i. 3, 10.

^e Exod. xxxiii. 14, 15.

presence was, we know, made visible by the pillar of cloud and fire, in which we have at least a very striking parallel to the "cloven tongues of fire" which sat upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost; and to the "rushing mighty wind which filled all the house where they were sitting,"^f and must therefore have been a visible vapour, as was the moving cloud in the wilderness.

We are afterwards expressly told that the Holy Spirit was thus given to Moses, and was communicated to the seventy elders, who were appointed by God as his assessors in judgment. God says, "I will take of the Spirit which is upon thee, and put it upon them." And afterwards we read that "the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto Moses, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease."^g These expressions of the Spirit being thus taken, and transferred, and resting, seem to imply some visible action, and certainly a real indwelling. So again Joshua the son of Nun is spoken of as a man "in whom is the Spirit;" and even of the chief artificers who were to construct the tabernacle, Bezaleel and Aholiab,^h it is said that they were "filled with the Spirit of

^f Acts ii. 2, 3. ^g Num. xi. 17—25. ^h Exod. xxxi. 2—6.

God in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge.”

Very observable also is that mysterious transaction by which a double portion of the spirit of Elijah was conveyed to Elisha after a sacramental manner, by the mantle of the glorified prophet falling on his successor.ⁱ

In the cases to which I have referred we have an outward and visible sign, conveying, as by an instrument, the inward and spiritual grace.

The same remark will apply to the use of the sacred oil, when employed to anoint prophets, priests, or kings, for the work to which God had called them. When Saul had been thus anointed we read that “God gave him another heart;” that he was turned into another man; that the spirit of God came upon him; and that he prophesied;^k and when Saul rebelled against God, we read,^l that the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil Spirit from the Lord troubled him. So, also, we are told that Caiaphas^m being the anointed^l High Priest that year, prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

These two cases, to which might be added that

ⁱ 2 Kings ii. 9. ^k 1 Sam. x. ^l 1 Sam. xvi. 14. ^m John, xi. 51.

of Balaam, shew that, with the visible anointing, there was actually conveyed a measure of God's Spirit for the work in hand. These cases are the more instructive and observable, because there is every reason to fear that two at least of those persons were unholy men; so that the Spirit of God might be given in so real and personal a manner that its recipient "became another man," "had the gift of prophecy, and understood all mysteries, and all knowledge,"ⁿ and yet without producing real conversion of the heart to God, and submission of the will to His will; a solemn lesson how far we may go in theological knowledge, so as to have "our eyes open," and with what correctness we may declare the will of God, without being wise unto salvation, or made meet to dwell with God. We may "see him, but not nigh;" we may know God by the hearing of the ear, without knowing him by the comprehension of the heart.

Yet we cannot doubt but that wherever there were evidences of spiritual life among those who lived under the Old Testament, the Spirit of God was acting upon their hearts, as with Christians now; and it is impossible to read the Psalms, for instance, where we find the Psalmist praying that God would not take from him his holy Spirit,

ⁿ 1 Cor. xiii. 2.

and that he would uphold him by his free Spirit,^o without feeling that all those devout affections were wrought into his soul by that one and the self-same Spirit dividing to every man severally as he willed.^p

As we look through the sacred history of the world, we see a long and continuous succession of gifted men in whom the Spirit was, and “in whose light they saw light.” These saw by his illumination what their fellow men did not, and could not see; for their enlightened faith saw the invisible, and gave it evidence, it saw the future, and made it present: for it was as true then as it is now that “the natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God, and cannot know them, for they are spiritually discerned;”^q but that they who “have an unction from the Holy One, know all things,”^r—are capable, that is, of receiving the whole counsel of God. There were many such spiritually enlightened men, doubtless, besides those whose prophecies are recorded in the Bible for the general edification of the universal Church, who edified the Church of their own age and country; and that was the Catholic Church to them.

But besides those who were endowed with the special miraculous gifts of the Spirit, (if it be

^o Ps. li. 12. ^p 1 Cor. xii. 11. ^q 1 Cor. i. 14, 15. ^r 1 John ii. 20.

right to draw such a distinction where all is special and preternatural)—but besides those inspired seers, there were many holy, humble, meek, and believing men (of whom the world was not worthy), the seven thousand who bowed not the knee to Baal,^s the children who would not partake of the king's meat, nor worship his golden image,^t and many like-minded, who underwent various forms of martyrdom, and whose names are written in the book of life, because their souls were quickened by the life-giving Spirit of their God. We find a summary of this goodly fellowship in that well-known chapter, (Heb. xi.,) and yet the Apostle having told of their patience and their triumph, adds, "these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not *the promise*; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Notwithstanding, therefore, the eminent communication of both the gifts, and the graces of God's Spirit to the holy and favoured men of that old dispensation, there was *a promise*, called by our Lord "the promise of the Father;" there was a "*perfect gift*;" which the greatest and most holy of them had not received.

This distinction is illustrated in a very striking manner by the intermediate position of John the

^s 1 Kings xix. 18.

^t Dan. i.—iii.

Baptist, of whom our Lord said that he was the greatest of all who had been born of women up to that day; and yet that the least in the kingdom of Heaven was greater than he.^u

Now we must bear in mind that the main distinction between the baptism of John, and that of our Lord, was that John baptized with water unto repentance (the death unto sin), but Jesus “the quickening Spirit,” baptized “with the *Holy Ghost, and with fire,*” unto the life of righteousness.

We do not read of any designation of John for his ministry by a visible communion of the Holy Ghost, (unless we are to understand in that sense St. Luke’s expression, “He was strong in spirit;”^x) but we do read expressly that when Jesus was in the baptismal waters of Jordan, the “heaven was opened upon him, and John saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.”^y The accounts given of the Baptist’s ministry are so scanty that it is difficult to judge of the character, or extent, of the Spiritual communication with which he was favoured, though we are told that he was “filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb,” and that he was commissioned by God to “turn

^u Matt. xi. 11.

^x Luke i. 80.

^y Matt. iii. 16.

many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.”^z

But the teaching of a master is often best known by its effects, whether good or bad, on his disciples, and of the disciples of the Baptist we have several accounts. We are told that Apollos was mighty in the Sacred Scripture, instructed in the way of the Lord, fervent in spirit, and teaching diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.^a Those disciples also of John the Baptist whom St. Paul found at Ephesus, whatever may have been the degree of their knowledge and attainments in other respects, “had not so much as heard whether there was any Holy Ghost :”^b and whatever interpretation we may put upon that expression, it clearly implies that there was something very deficient in their views and attainments ; and that it was not merely the absence of those miraculous powers which were afterwards conferred upon them, is evident from the pains taken by Aquila and Priscilla to expound to Apollos, who was in a similar position, “the way of the Lord more perfectly.” The pious people too, even before the baptism of John, who were known as a class by the designation of those

^z Luke i. 15, 16.

^a Acts, xviii. 24.

^b Acts xix. 2.

“who looked for redemption in Israel,”^c clearly had some particular teaching of the Holy Ghost, which enabled them to see a glimmering, at least, of light, through the obscurity of that dispensation, as was the case with Anna, for instance, who “departed not from the temple, day and night.” We are expressly told also of Simeon, an eminent member of that body, that he was a just and devout man, “waiting for the consolation of Israel,” *and that the Holy Ghost was upon him*, and we are told that he came *by the Spirit* into the temple when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do to him after the custom of the law.^d

Thus, in all these cases, there was a considerable, and distinguishing communion of the Holy Ghost, and we may add continually increasing in intensity, clearness, and power, up to the time of our Lord ; and yet still with manifest marks of imperfection, and the constant express declaration of the inspired writers that there was something greater and more blessed, in reserve for the children of God.

If now we advance to the personal ministry of our blessed Lord in whom the Spirit dwelt “without measure,” we find two very observable circumstances, first, that much of spiritual influence

^c Luke ii. 38.

^d Luke ii. 25.

was communicated, even while he was yet personally present with the Church; but secondly, that much more was withheld and promised.

We have observed that the baptism of Christ was specially to be “the baptism of the Holy Ghost;” and we are told^e that “Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,” though he deputed the office of baptizing to his disciples. Yet we read of the Baptist that “there went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.”^f Therefore as Jesus baptized more disciples than John, a vast multitude of persons having been taught by our Lord, and having confessed that he was the Christ, must have been baptized under his eyes, by his disciples, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Were all these baptized with the Holy Ghost? and if so, what was the character and degree of the gifts or graces thus conveyed to them, and in what were they deficient? What lacked they yet? That they lacked something we are quite certain, for we read long after, even in the last day of the feast just before our Lord’s death, that “the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.”^g Our Lord had indeed, at a

^e John iv. 1.

^f Mat. iii. 5, 6.

^g John vii. 39.

much earlier period, told his disciples that "when they should be brought unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, they were to take no thought how or what things they should answer, or what they should say, because the Holy Ghost should teach them, in the same hour, what they should say."^h Still more remarkable, however, as illustrative of the view we are taking, is that memorable transaction in which our Lord "breathed on his disciples, and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."ⁱ These words are very remarkable, whether we look back and consider what the disciples had previously received, or look forward, and bear in mind that they were still in expectation of a more abundant blessing.

a. With regard to their previous apostolical course, we must remember that not only had they been called by our Lord to be apostles, but they had been sent out by him through Judea, and he had given them "power against unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases."^k Nor was it only the Twelve to whom such powers were given, for the Seventy also were commissioned

^h Luke xii. 11, 12. ⁱ John xx. 22. ^k Mat. x. 1.

“to heal the sick, and power was given to them to tread upon serpents, and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy ;”¹ and it was promised that “nothing should by any means hurt them.” That expression, too, “he that heareth you, heareth me,”^m and so forth, addressed to the Seventy ; and the declaration, also addressed to them, that it should be “more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for the cities against which they should shake off the dust of their feet,” implies much the same as the binding and loosing authority given after the resurrection to the Twelve.ⁿ *b.* Still how much had they yet in prospect, for even with regard to the Twelve, on a subsequent occasion to that in which our Lord had breathed on them, and thus visibly conveyed to them the Holy Spirit for the work to which he called them, he said “Behold I send the promise of the Father upon you ; but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem ; until ye be endued with power from on high.”^o They had been formally commissioned ; they had already received and exercised miraculous powers ; the Spirit had been given to separate them unto the office of Apostles ; and yet they had not received *the promise of the Father*. They had not yet

¹ Luke x. 9, 19.^m Luke x. 16.ⁿ John xx. 22.^o Luke xxiv. 49.

experienced that which was spoken of by Joel; ^p nor had they been endued with power from on high, in fulfilment of the prophecy that the Lord should “ascend on high, leading captivity captive, to receive gifts for men, yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” ^q The Spirit of God was indeed *with* the disciples of Jesus, for many blessed purposes, but he was not yet *in them* in the full sense of the Saviour’s gracious promise in the text.

II. Our way is now cleared to the second question which we proposed to investigate; namely:—*What was that promise of the Father?* What was that new and distinguishing gift for which the disciples were to tarry at Jerusalem, and which was, as on this day, bestowed on the Church?

This is an enquiry, be it remembered, not of private interpretation, or individual theory, but a plain Scriptural investigation as to what God promised by Joel and David, and “as many as spake of these things;” and what he did indeed perform. It is moreover a subject of deep personal interest; for the promise was not to the men of that day, nor even to their children merely, but “to as many as the Lord our God shall call;” and “He is no respecter of persons,

^p Joel ii. 28.

^q Ps. lxxviii, 18.

but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.”^r On recurring to the prophecy of Joel which Saint Peter expressly says is that which was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, we read of the “pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh,” and of dreams, visions, and prophecyings, as gifts to the Church. Hence we conclude, (*a*), That the Church was to be enlarged so as to embrace “all flesh” within the fold of Christ; and that (*b*), it was to be endowed with special gifts.

(*a.*) With regard to the promised *enlargement* of the Church by the pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh,^s it has often been understood to imply the universal conversion of the world: and therefore has been regarded as something yet to come. But the expression of Saint Peter that the prophecy was actually fulfilled on that day, when there were present “devout men of every nation under Heaven:” and the subsequent result that God henceforth made no distinction between Jew and Gentile, but “broke down the middle wall of partition,” and poured out on the Gentiles also the gift of the Holy Ghost,^t appears

^r Acts x. 34, 35.

^s Acts, x. 45.

^t See Acts, ii. 5. There were present good men “of every nation under heaven,” and the gift of tongues enabled them all to receive the blessed message that God was prepared to dwell among them. The gift of tongues was adapted to the pouring out of the Spirit on *all flesh*, and the cloven tongues were a sign of their being *bilinguals*—reversing the curse of Babel.

to limit us to the conclusion that what was meant by the words spoken by Joel, was simply, that "the kingdom of Heaven was opened to all believers," of all kindreds, and people, and tongues."^u

It is the more important to bear this in mind, because mistaken views of the real meaning of this promise, lie at the root of errors which have an injurious effect, in many ways, on the ministry of the gospel, and more especially on the whole missionary work. Yet what a warrant does it give, when rightly understood, for missionary zeal, even to the very ends of the earth, for is any thing too great to expect from the assurance that the Holy Spirit has been already bestowed as a universal and an everlasting gift? the effects of which the Church is constantly experiencing, and will experience more and more in proportion as it puts forth greater energy, and makes more costly sacrifices, for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. Wherever the Holy Spirit accompanies, with divine power, the preaching of the gospel, there is the result, and the application of that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel, but which was given and fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. Just as the work of Jesus was

^u We are told that the times of the Apostles were *the last days*. See Acts ii. 17. 2 Tim. iii. 1. Heb. i. 2. 2 Pet. iii. 3.

“finished,” when he “bowed his head and gave up the ghost,” but is applied when each individual believer is crucified with him to the world, and the flesh, and overcomes the devil; so when we say, according to the words of Saint Peter, that the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, we mean to assert that access to God by the Spirit was then opened to all, and provision made for the spiritual wants of the Church to the end of time.

Therefore the pentecostal effusion of the Spirit was a visible manifestation that the once crucified, but now glorified Saviour, had taken to himself great power, in heaven and in earth, and had set up the kingdom which could not be moved. His reign had begun, even in the midst of his enemies; the mustard seed was planted that was to become a great tree for all the fowls under heaven; the stone was cut out with hands, that was to break in pieces the image of man’s dominion, and to become a great mountain, filling the whole earth.

It was, in truth, the baptism, the spiritual nativity of Christ’s holy Catholic Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. That grand idea rises up henceforth before our imagination of the “Holy Church throughout all the world”—the called, and chosen, and faithful,

of all nations, and of all ages, the ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, the militant and the triumphant, saying with a loud voice, from heaven and from earth, "Worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing."^x That song of harmonious praise was *the promise* of the Father unto the Son, when he said, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession;"^y and that promise was fulfilled by the Spirit being poured out on all flesh, to sanctify, without any national distinction, all the elect people of God, by dwelling in them, and supplying them with such special power as their peculiar circumstances required—a pledge and assurance to the Church that God would at all times, and under all circumstances, supply its need, whatever that need might be, for the sake of combining together the scattered members of Christ into one mystical body.

It is doubtless a very glorious and sublime idea, that of the "gathering together in one of the children of God that are scattered abroad"^z to become one body, a bride adorned for her heavenly bridegroom, and sanctified and cleansed with the

^x Rev. v. 10.^y Ps. ii. 8.^z John xi. 50.

washing of water by the word, and presented to him all “glorious within,” “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but holy and without blemish.”^a Yet when we turn from the contemplation of the idea, as presented to us in Sacred Scripture, of what the Church is designed to be, and such as she was when believers were of one heart and of one mind, to the actual condition of the visible community of those who “profess and call themselves Christians,” well may we exclaim with the prophet, “How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.”^b In good truth, the history of the Church of Christ is a very painful subject, for though, blessed be God, it presents to us, in bright array, “the noble army of martyrs,” and those patient confessors of their Lord, of whom the world was not worthy; yet it tells of corruptions spreading even from the earliest times, and of the very triumphs of the cross in the Roman Empire, fixing and extending many of those corruptions, when “he that did bite was taken out of the way.” It tells us of contentious sects, “biting and devouring one another, until they were consumed one of the other,”^c and this, as the Apostle declares, because they were not walking in the Spirit, but

^a Eph. v. 27.^b Lam. iv. 1.^c Gal. v. 15.

were carnal, fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. We see in consequence along whole districts of the Lord's vineyard the fences so broken down by divisions and worldliness, that "the boar out of the wood wasted it, and the wild beast of the field devoured it."^d Paganism, in many instances, regained the ground it had lost, and Islamism won an easy triumph over whole nations of nominal Christians, while they were contending together about ecclesiastical supremacy, vestments, and ordinances, and the oppositions of theological "science, falsely so called;"^e vain babblings, which were ever the louder, and more vehement, in proportion as their subject was of the least practical importance, and the furthest removed from the grasp of man's limited understanding.

Then came on the monstrous usurpation of the Church of Rome, superseding the ancient primacy of the chair of St. James, and presuming to occupy the very throne of Christ, *instead* of His Spirit, who was to be with the Church to the end of time, in His place, the only real *vicarius Christi*, as the Spirit has been not unfitly called. The claim of the Church of Rome to exercise universal dominion, and require external unity, and ceremonial conformity, according to her rule, has been the great source of schism, by refusing

^d Ps. lxxx. 12, 13.

^e 1 Tim. vi. 20.

the very name of Christ to all that will not “receive her mark on their foreheads,”^f for it is of the essence of schism when a part claims to be the whole. Would that unity had not been sacrificed elsewhere, and since, to a dead uniformity; for this it is, mainly, which has prevented, and does yet hinder our all coming “in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” that is, to unity under Him, the head over all things to his Church.^g Yet such was the object of the gift this day bestowed upon the Church for Christ’s sake, and such will be its issue. “In that the Father put all in subjection under the Son, he left nothing that is not put under him:” and though “we see not yet all things put under Him,” we do see that, in the midst of sad general corruption, the kingdom of Christ has been extended, and is extending; the gospel has proved to be the power of God unto salvation, and the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, has not only been present *with* the Church, but has truly dwelt in the hearts of God’s adopted children, preparing them for the glory that shall be revealed. They alone in whom the Spirit thus dwells are, inclusively, and exclusively, the Catholic Church of the living God—his children—the spiritual

^f Rev. xiii. 17.

^g Eph. iv. 13.

worshippers whom the Father seeketh to worship Him, and whom he gives to the Son that they may have eternal life.

This part, however, of our subject, namely, the effect of the pentecostal gift on individual believers, must be reserved for our consideration this afternoon.

In the mean time, we should bear in mind what are the practical results to which we are brought by a scriptural view of the Spirit's agency.

I.—One lesson which we may learn from this review is that not only of the reality of Spiritual influence, but of the personality and proper Deity of Him by whom that influence has been exerted. We learn that the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is a real, living being, acting in a manner unseen by us, as the wind is felt but not perceived; yet coming and going; grieved and striving; visiting one and leaving another; teaching prophets and apostles; supporting martyrs and confessors; and comforting and teaching the people of God. There is something of individuality in such actions, and though one almost shrinks from the attempt to give utterance to the feelings, and experience of faith touching Him, *the Holy One*, (for language is a rude vehicle for the expression of spiritual ideas, and there is something of a too material character

in the terms we are compelled to use on the most abstract, and mysterious subjects,) yet in the account which the Bible gives us of what the Spirit has done for the Church, we see distinctive traces of the divine character, and the near, and almost familiar intercourse of a friend, and guide.

It is in the Bible that the mysteries of the Triune Jehovah are best studied; for they are presented to us there, not as matters of abstract reasoning, or dogmatical assertion, but of personal application; and certainly the most profitable way in which we may learn to think rightly of the Trinity, and especially of the Catholic doctrine of the personality, and divinity of the Holy Ghost, is by following out historically, in a humble, teachable, and devout spirit, the Scriptural account of the mode and extent of his operation; and comparing that account with what we ourselves experience of his actings upon our own hearts.

II. Another practical lesson which we should learn from the subject is, that the abode of the Spirit with the Universal Church was not to form a new Church; but to enlarge and enlighten the old one—"the Israel of God." Still less was it to produce a merely external unity, the outward and visible form of a Church only; but to create a new, living, breathing man, the body of Christ

united to him as its head, and acting under him, and according to his one and supreme will.

Hence it follows that we are individually members of that holy fellowship to which the promises belong only in proportion as, feeding hour by hour upon the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we grow up into him in all things, and are very members incorporate of his mystical body, which is the blessed company of all faithful people. Our interest in all these privileges, as a Church, or as individuals, is not to be made out by genealogical deductions, but is to be demonstrated by the sanctity of our conduct, the devotedness of our zeal, the meekness of our tempers, the humility of our spirit, and the depth of our self-denying love.

Without Him we are nothing, and can do nothing; for we have no independent life, and it is only while we abide in him, and he in us, that we can live or be fruitful; and it is only while our own, or any other Church, is productive of such living and fruit-bearing branches, that she can reasonably rejoice in the perception of pentecostal blessings. The Spirit was poured out on the primitive church for its advancement in holiness and power, and it is impossible to read the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles, without

feeling that the disciples of Christ did so advance from that day forward; they became new men, and had another mind given to them. They became bold, and decided; men of deeper views, and more exalted aims, who “counted not their lives dear unto them if they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry which they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the grace of God.”^h

Even so “the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every one of us to profit withal,”ⁱ and we should give all diligence that our profiting may appear unto all men by our bringing forth more abundantly the fruits of the Spirit in “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.” Such good fruits will shew that God is with us of a truth, and his Spirit thus “working in us will witness to our spirits that we are the sons of God.”

III. Further we derive this advantage from the visible nature of the Spirit’s actings in the former ages of the Church, that we learn something of the manner and circumstances under which God is pleased now to communicate his manifold gifts of grace. We cannot but observe, then, that outward signs were usually, indeed

^h Acts, xx. 24.

ⁱ 1 Cor. xii. 7.

we might almost say uniformly, employed to convey the Holy Ghost, though doubtless the gifts thus conveyed might have been communicated without any such outward process, and visible demonstration. In illustration of this remark we need only refer to the anointing oil, the imposition of hands, the breathing of our Lord on his disciples, and the tongues of fire on the day of Pentecost. Thus has God intimated to us that He is pleased to connect the inward and spiritual grace with the outward and visible sign, not indeed as cause and effect, but as means and end ; and so to connect them that we have no warrant in expecting the end without the use of the means. The Sacraments, therefore, and the other means of grace which Christ has ordained for the conveyance and the continuance of spiritual life, are “generally necessary to salvation.” We cannot say that God may not, and even does not, grant his holy Spirit without the use of such means, as the Holy Ghost seems in former times to have possessed, and inspired individuals, in what might be deemed an irregular manner ; but we dare not neglect the ordinances of God with which his promises of the Spirit’s presence stand connected ; while, on the other hand, we use those sacraments and ordinances in the assured

hope through faith of receiving the grace of which they are the divinely appointed sign, and pledge, and conveying instrument.

IV. Yet, on the other hand, we learn from the discontinuance of the anointing oil as a symbol of the Holy Spirit in the ordination of ministers of the New Testament, that the dispensation of symbols has passed away. The Spirit is now conveyed by prayer, and the laying on of hands, but not symbolized by any material sign. And it is the more important to bear this in mind because no small portion of the errors which have of late distracted our Church, appear to have been derived from looking in the Christian dispensation for a series of symbols parallel to those of the Mosaic ritual; instead of which we should remember that in the Gospel we have *the very thing* of which Judaism had the sign—we have the substance of their shadow, not another shadow of a more subtle and less opaque character; but the absolute removal of all shadow by the full glory of the light of Christ. Thus the Jews had the anointing oil for their prophets, their priests, and their kings, as a symbol of the Holy Spirit which was given for the discharge of those offices; but Christ has made *all his people*, without distinction, kings and priests to their

God and Father, not with an outward anointing, but by the real communication of the Holy Spirit. Hence they share his triumph and reign with him ; and offer up unto him spiritual sacrifices of prayer, and praise, and holy living ; and serve not in the oldness of the letter but in newness of spirit.

V. Lastly let us from what God has done hitherto for his Church and people, learn to expect largely from his abundant grace. We have seen that the Holy Ghost was from the beginning with the Church, in a measure, according to its special necessities ; and that every promise of a more abundant outpouring of the Spirit was fulfilled. What an encouragement is thus given to us to pray to Him, who has promised to give his Holy Spirit to those that ask Him, that he would be pleased to convey the riches of that heavenly grace to ourselves individually, to the Universal Church, and specially to that branch of it which by his goodness has been established in our country, to all in authority over us, to all who are working with us, that God may so bless and guide, sustain and sanctify us and them, leading us into all truth, and preserving us from all error, that we may be effectual ministers of his good pleasure, and that through our instrument-

ality, though in ourselves we be nothing, his way may be known upon earth, his saving health among all nations, with whom he has placed us as a people in such extensive, mysterious, and deeply responsible contact.

SERMON II.

JOHN xiv. 17.

He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.

As these words form part of our Lord's discourse with his disciples immediately before he passed over the brook Cedron, and entered into the garden of Gethsemane, there to be delivered into the hands of wicked men, they describe the condition of the Church up to the latest period of his personal ministry. Yet in our consideration of this subject this morning, we have seen (1) how very largely the Holy Spirit had been granted to the Church of the Old Testament; and that not the Apostles only, but the seventy Disciples also, had been endowed before the day of Pentecost with miraculous powers, as a warrant for their ministry, and with special gifts and graces for its discharge.

Still it is evident from the text that some greater blessing was withheld and promised; and

that greater blessing, the reception of which made it expedient for them that Jesus should go away, was to be waited for at Jerusalem, as a qualification for their ministry, even though the risen Saviour had previously breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."^a

It appeared then further (2) that "*the promise of the Father*," as given by Joel, and fulfilled at the day of Pentecost, was of a two-fold import: first, in respect of the universality of the blessing—that the Spirit should be poured on *all flesh*—and next, with regard to the special character of the gifts then conveyed; adapted, as they were, to the peculiar wants of the Church at that time.

Having thus considered two of the questions proposed for our investigation; namely, (1) the degree of spiritual influence which was granted to the Church before the day of Pentecost: and (2) the nature of the gift then communicated: it remains that we now enquire,

(3) *What is our present and personal interest in that gift?* In other words, what were and are the distinguishing peculiarities of the ministration of the Spirit, that is of the gospel dispensation? How was the Spirit, who up to the day of Pentecost dwelt *with* believers, so to dwell *in* them afterwards that they should become temples

^a John xx. 22.

of the Holy Ghost, Christ thus fulfilling his promise that he would be with his Church, even to the end of the world ?

I. To answer this question, we must consider the terms in which "*the promise of the Father*" was conveyed; and the manner in which it was fulfilled as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, yet further illustrated in the Epistles, and compared with the present influence of the Spirit on the people of God.

In the 68th Psalm we are told, generally, that the Messiah was to "ascend up on high, to receive gifts for men, yea even for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." But the prophet Joel is more explicit, and declares that when the Spirit should be poured upon all flesh "the sons and daughters should prophesy, the old men should dream dreams, the young men should see visions; and also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids in those days God would pour out his Spirit."^b As then we have already seen that the Catholic Church was constituted by the pouring out of the Spirit on all flesh—that is on every nation—so here we see that the Church was to be richly endowed by the general communication of the Holy Spirit, to the believing members of Christ, without distinc-

^b Joel ii. 28.

tion of age, sex, or station. Moses had said, "Would that all the Lord's people were prophets;"^c and here we are told that the "sons and daughters should prophesy:" which is at least in harmony with our Lord's gracious invitation, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."^d The "old men and the young men" may be taken in an official sense, as in 1 Pet. v. 5., "Ye younger submit to the elder;" and perhaps also in what St. John says in his first epistle, of old and young men: and if received in this sense it will imply that the special and personal reception of the Spirit should not be restricted to the Apostles and Elders of the Church, to qualify them for their peculiar services, but that it should be the common inheritance of all the holy brethren. It would imply that there should be no such strongly marked distinction as there had been under the law between the priests, and levites, and the people, but that the gifts and graces of the Spirit should be communicated to all, in a far more general manner, only with a distinctive call to the discharge of special duties. The mention also of the servants and handmaids is to the same effect; and indicates one grand feature of the Christian dispensation. "The poor

^c Numbers xi. 29.

^d Luke xviii. 16.

have the gospel preached to them.”^e “As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for they are all one in Christ Jesus.”^f

This is a distinctive feature of Christianity in respect both of Judaism, and Paganism. In the latter it is well known that the esoteric and exoteric doctrines differed essentially from each other, and that the people were studiously and on principle excluded from the hidden doctrines conveyed in the mysteries, because it was a more spiritual system, and at variance with the popular mythology. But with regard even to Judaism, not only was there the difference between Jew and Greek, but it could hardly be said that there was none between male and female, when the initiatory sacramental rite was applicable to one sex only. Nor is this all; for there must have been something very nearly approaching to an esoteric doctrine. The Spirit of God must have taught individuals truths not revealed, at least to ordinary perceptions, in the portion of Holy Writ possessed by that ancient Church. Not only were there traditions of the elders by which the word of God was made of none effect, but

^e Matt. xi. 5.

^f Gal. iii. 27, 8.

there is every reason to suppose that there were also real spiritual truths handed on, with more or less distinctness and purity, from one to the other, which acted as a key whereby believers discovered "the secret things of God's word." We feel on reading the Psalms, for instance, that the Psalmist not only possessed himself, but assumes the possession in ordinary uninspired readers of views of doctrine, the sources of which we, at least, cannot discover in the previously revealed Scriptures. Amidst all the darkness—the thick veil—which evidently hung over the minds of the Jews in the time of our Lord, we perceive traces of doctrinal views respecting the resurrection of the body, for example, of which, to say the least, we find no distinct revelation before life and immortality were brought to light by the Gospel. The Rabbinical comments, also, on the Sacred Scripture (in the midst of multiplied puerilities) prove that the Jews possessed views of Divine truth, which were not conveyed by the mere letter of the Old Testament; nor can we suppose that believing Jews assisted at the sacrifices ordained by the law of Moses, without having a spiritual perception of the one great sacrifice for sin which the Mosaical writings are far from teaching so as to be readily perceived by all. Ceremonies, indeed, were plainly revealed;

the history of God's dealings with his people was given with much particularity; but doctrines were so sparingly communicated that the book of Job, obscure as it is, has sometimes been regarded as a doctrinal supplement to the writings of Moses. But the prophecy of Joel predicts that even the servants and handmaids should prophesy; and the fact was, and is, that the veil is done away in Christ,^s so that all believers behold with open face, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, by the Spirit of the Lord. There is the same full and explicit revelation of doctrines under the New Testament that there was of ceremonies under the Old Testament, while on the other hand we have nothing in the New Testament answering to the Leviticus of the Old. All Christians are now encouraged to search the Sacred Scriptures, as the recently converted Bereans were by St. Paul, with the promise that if they search them in humility, and faith, and prayer, they shall be taught of God, and guided into all truth that is necessary for their salvation.

Another point worthy of remark, in reference to the gifts conferred on the Church, is that the promise in Joel says nothing about the gift of tongues; nor indeed of any special miraculous powers with which individuals should be endowed,

^s 2 Cor. iii. 14.

except that they should prophesy ; and that God would himself “ shew wonders in the heaven and in the earth,” of such a nature that they are described under the terrible figures of “ blood and fire and pillars of smoke.” Yet it seems to be with some special reference to the gift of tongues that St. Peter says, “ This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel.” The promise was that the Spirit should be given to all flesh, and that they to whom he was given should prophesy ; that is should reveal, or declare, or expound the written word of God, past, present, or to come, to all people. As it was, however, impossible that this could be done by “ unlearned and ignorant men,” the promise of the means, the gift of tongues, was included in the promise of the end—the universal preaching of the gospel. When our Lord commissioned the Twelve, and afterwards the Seventy, to preach the gospel throughout *Judea*, he gave them authority over unclean spirits, and to heal all manner of diseases ; but he said nothing *then* of their speaking with new tongues, because that gift was not required to enable them to preach the gospel to their own countrymen. But when, after his resurrection, he charged them to “ *go into all the world*, and to preach the gospel to all nations ; ”

he then, for the first time, foretold that believers should speak with new tongues.

From all this we may, I think, deduce the important conclusion that the gift of tongues, at least, was only an accidental circumstance of the outpouring of the Spirit, required by the peculiar wants of the Church as a missionary body sent forth, at once, upon a work which needed the possession of other tongues than that in which they were born. In confirmation of which we may observe that St. Paul, whose missionary labours appear to have been the most extensive, and among the greatest variety of people, thanks God that he “spake with tongues”^h more than others. We may, in like manner, thank God that we have greater facility of intercourse with the various nations of the world than others, and possess versions of the Sacred Scripture in a far greater variety of languages than was the lot of Christians in any former age, or any other country: and, therefore, we have no reason to look for the gift of tongues, for which we have no special necessity; and we have certainly an especial call to be more abundant than others in missionary labours: but we are warranted to believe that the Lord our God will dwell among us, and supply all our need whatever it may be.

^h 1 Cor. xiv. 18.

Would that this special call to missionary labour were more deeply felt by British Christians, as being the very work which the Lord of the vineyard has with the greatest distinctness assigned to them; and that in consequence more of our very best and choicest spirits, our young men of highest promise, were moved to consecrate themselves, their talents, and their attainments, to that blessed and honourable service, the forefront of the Lord's battle.

Thus then we see that while, on the one hand, the distinguishing feature of the gift this day bestowed on the Church was the universality of the blessing; so, on the other hand, the gift was, in respect of its nature, such as to supply the peculiar necessities of the Church at that time, and of such extent as to give the disciples reason to rejoice that the bodily presence of that gracious Lord who had hitherto been their Comforter was withdrawn, and that he had sent unto them another Comforter to teach them truths which they had not been able to bear before, and to endue them with powers and virtues which they had not previously received.

Here, however, we are met with an inquiry of the most extreme personal interest; namely, what is all this to us individual Christians? When the Holy Spirit who had been *with* the disciples,

came and dwelt *in them*, according to the words of our Lord in the text, He manifested his presence by giving them utterance in other tongues, by shewing to them things to come, and by enabling them to do many wonderful works. But what interest have we in a promise which was thus fulfilled, and what evidence, short of similar mighty works, can testify the Spirit's hidden residence in our hearts?

That we may have clear ideas on this point, and give a satisfactory reply to such questions, let us pass in review the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the early Church, and compare them with the work of the Spirit on every believer in Jesus Christ, under the present circumstances of the Church.

1. *Miracles*.—In the first place we observe that the power to work miracles had been possessed by the Church long before the day of Pentecost; that it was, as we have just seen, no part of the original promise, except as implied in the necessity of the means to the end; and that in our Lord's discourse from which the text is taken, when He speaks of the coming of the Spirit of Truth to dwell in the disciples, He says nothing of the *gifts* which were to be manifested, but a great deal of the heavenly *knowledge* and *graces* which were to be conferred. When the Seventy

returned from their mission with joy, saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us through thy name;" the answer of Jesus was, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."ⁱ Hence it appears that miraculous gifts were not only not of the essence of the indwelling of the Spirit, but that they were not even its most important accident. What was essential, and of vital moment, was the assurance of "a place in the Lamb's book of life;" but such assurance may be as much, and as truly, the portion of one of God's children now, as it could have been of the very chiefest among the Apostles. St. Paul says that the gospel came to the Thessalonians "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;"^k and even if we suppose the word *power* to refer to miraculous gifts, it is clear that the other expressions do not. Moreover, as any or all of these gifts might exist without love, and therefore without life, whatever *assured* the Thessalonians, "made their calling and election sure," may in like manner assure our hearts. If they were convinced by the miracle of tongues, or other preternatural agency, that Jesus was exalted to the right hand of God, and that the gift of the Spirit was conferred on

ⁱ Luke x. 17, 20.^k 1 Thes. i. 5.

them by him ; so may believers now have similar convictions, when they “feel in themselves (to use the language of our Church) the working of the Spirit of Christ mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their minds to high and heavenly things.”¹

II. So with regard to *Prophecy*. It was foretold, among the other promised gifts, that they on whom the Holy Spirit should be poured out, should see visions, dream dreams, and *prophecy*. This was, we know, fulfilled to the early Church in a way peculiar to itself: but it was also fulfilled in a way common to us. As the new law was conveyed to the Church on the day which commemorated the giving of the old law; so was it after a somewhat similar manner that God then made known his will. Our Lord had told his disciples that the Spirit should bring to their remembrance all things that they had seen and heard, and “should shew them things to come.” Accordingly we find several visions recorded; that, for instance, of St. Peter, respecting intercourse with Gentiles; that of Saul at his conversion, and of Æneas, and many others. The New Testament abounds also in prophecies, and has one book almost exclusively prophetic: and we collect from 2 Thes. ii. 6, that the Thessalonians

¹ Art. xvii.

were well acquainted with the Christian prophecies respecting antichrist. Still it is clear, as I need hardly say, that the word to *prophecy* is used in a much wider sense than that of foretelling future events, even when immediately connected with the fulfilment of Joel's prediction. For example, when Peter and John returned from the council of the Jews to their Christian brethren, and they had all joined together in prayer and praise, we read that "the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and *spoke the word with boldness.*"^m We should have expected to read that they forthwith "prophesied, and ceased not;" but we find boldness in proclaiming the gospel mentioned as the immediate result of their being filled with the Holy Ghost. Indeed the whole history of the Apostles after the day of Pentecost, compared with their previous conduct, shews that a main effect of the gift of the Spirit was to make them bold in preaching Christ. Such freedom from the fear of man, and worldly motives, as will lead us now to confess Christ before men, without being ashamed of Him, and his cause, and if ministers, fully to preach his gospel, is still a characteristic result of the indwelling of God's Spirit. When the

^m Acts iv. 31.

Spirit dwells in the heart of a man assuring him by his own experience of the truth and power of religion; the simplicity, and fearless singleness of mind with which such a man will proclaim the whole counsel of God, will be according to his personal conviction of its truth and importance: he will "prophesy according to the proportion of his faith."ⁿ

There is another sense also in which the prophetic influence of the Spirit may yet be communicated to the Church; and that is in teaching its members to apply prophecies which have been already fulfilled, and to comprehend the meaning of those which yet await their fulfilment. Those seem to have been called prophets in the New Testament who were employed in the exposition of prophecy, and in shewing how all the prophets of the Old Testament gave witness to Christ; and though we have no warrant to expect preternatural illumination for individual students of prophecy, and certainly there is abundant reason to convince us that no such special teaching by the Spirit has hitherto been granted, yet we are warranted to believe that God's Spirit will guide the Church into all needful truth, and that devout and humble investigators of Sacred Scripture will be employed by

ⁿ Rom. xii. 6.

him to make known his designs, as the various events referred to in prophecy approach to their accomplishment.

3. *Baptism*. — When we pass from these special gifts to what are considered the more ordinary effects of the presence of the Holy Spirit with the Church, we find that if it was true of believers of the first age, that the Holy Ghost was not only with them, but dwelling in them; it is, in the same sense, equally true of believers in Christ at the present moment. In the first place, it is impossible to overlook the connexion of the gift of the Holy Ghost with Christian *baptism*: but the promises made to the early Church in that sacrament are none other than those which are now made to ourselves. St. Peter preached to those who had witnessed the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”^o Though we do not look for such miraculous gifts as those who were then baptized received, yet we look for, and *if penitent and faithful*, receive as true a “gift of the Holy Ghost” as they did. The waters of Baptism seal to us an interest in the same privileges, and con-

^o Acts ii. 38.

vey to us, as by a legal instrument (to use the significant illustration of our Church) the same grace, and that upon similar conditions; namely, repentance and faith, without which nothing is conveyed; even as a deed is said to convey an estate from one person to another, but the accidental or unjust possession of a title deed, without a legal title, does not of itself give an interest in the estate, though it does give presumptive evidence of such an interest.

It is important to observe also, in reference to this subject, that even in the early Church the gift of the Holy Ghost, whether of ordinary grace, or of miraculous power, does not appear to have been uniformly, or exclusively, granted in immediate connexion with baptism. For instance, when Peter had preached to Cornelius and his company, "while he yet spake," the Holy Ghost fell on *all them* that heard the word."^p *After* the Spirit had thus confirmed the efficacy of the Apostle's preaching, St Peter proceeds to say, "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"^q So we see that they did not receive the Holy Ghost because they were baptized, but they were baptized because the Holy Ghost had already accompanied the

^p Acts x. 44.

^q Acts x. 47.

word preached, according to our Lord's promise, "with signs following" in them by whom it was believed; they received the title deed, because their interest in the estate had been demonstrated.

On the other hand, the disciples of John the Baptist whom St. Paul found at Ephesus, and who had "not so much as heard whether there was any Holy Ghost,"^r were first baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus, and it was not until the Apostle had afterwards laid his hands on them that "the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

To take a totally different case, Simon Magus is said to have believed, and to have been baptized; and there is every reason to suppose that when the Apostles Peter and John came down to Samaria, and laid their hands on the recent converts there, that Simon Magus received the Holy Ghost with the rest. Yet we read, immediately afterwards, that his "heart was not right with God, and that he was in the gall of bitterness, and the bond of perdition."^s

Thus is the connexion of the Spirit of God with baptism the same now that it was in the beginning.

4. *Ordination.* So also in *ordination*. We believe that God's Spirit does now move the

^r Acts xix. 2.

^s Acts viii. 23.

hearts of good and humble men, first to qualify themselves by all needful learning for the work of the ministry, and then to devote themselves to that blessed office: and we believe that they who, being thus moved, seek the imposition of the hands of the Bishop, and of the Presbytery, and the prayers of the Church, do receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work to which they are ordained, and much boldness in the service of their Lord and Master. There is nothing in the epistles of St. Paul to Timothy or Titus, which is not applicable to the work and the privileges of a minister of Christ among ourselves; and when the Apostle exhorts Timothy^t to keep that good thing which was committed to him by the Holy Ghost, which he says, as in our text, *dwelleth in us*, he uses language which a Bishop may now address to one of his presbyters. While guarding most sedulously therefore, against exaggerated and Judaizing notions of sacerdotal pre-eminence, which are utterly inconsistent with the whole genius of Christianity, we must be careful so to magnify our office, as to claim the spiritual privileges which were promised by Christ when he said, “Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world,”^u for certainly no consideration is more calculated to stimulate to

^t 2 Tim. i. 14.

^u Matt. xxviii. 20.

devoted zeal, or to rouse to holy vigilance, than that we have our Lord, though absent in body, yet spiritually present by the Holy Ghost who dwelleth in us. What a thought is this to accompany a clergyman in his closet, his family, his parish, and his church ! What earnestness will it impart to his prayers, what sanctity to his conversation, what power and tenderness to his pastoral intercourse, what unction, simplicity, and weight, to his entire ministrations ! We may still say, with grateful joy, “when he ascended up on high he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”^x

5. *Ordinary Christian life.* So again with regard to the *ordinary life of a Christian*, we shall find what corresponds with the gifts bestowed on the Church. If the minister of Christ is warranted to believe that the Holy Ghost will dwell in him after any spiritual manner, it is simply in reference to his meetness for the office to which he has been called, and his support in its discharge ; for unto every member of the household of faith is given grace “according to the measure

^x Eph. iv. 8—12.

of the gift of Christ ;”^y that is, the gift of Christ—the Holy Spirit—is conveyed by the triumphant Saviour to all his people, as every one hath need ; not only to the early Christians as they had need, nor to the ministers of Christ according to their wants, but to the universal Church, till the mystical body of Christ is completed by the accession of every joint, and member, knit together in love under its living Head. Christ and his work are the same now as ever ; “for by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body,” the Spirit dividing grace to every one severally as *he* wills, and as *they* need. As we would not confine the promise of the Spirit to the Apostles, but shew that, for all ministerial purposes, it extends to all the ministers and stewards of God’s mysteries ; so also we would carefully maintain the interest of all God’s children in the like gift, according to their individual necessities, and according to the faith with which they are enabled to plead the promise which was given “to as many as the Lord our God should call.”^z If we refer to the words connected with the text, we do not find any thing that need restrict their application to the Apostles, or to the men of that day. What he said unto them, he said unto all : “If ye love me, keep my commandments, and I

^y Eph. iv. 7.

^z Acts ii. 39.

will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but he dwelleth with you, *and shall be in you.*" Neither is it true that "the gift of the Spirit" means, as some have imagined and taught, only miraculous powers; for St. Paul is writing to ordinary Christians, and with reference to their daily walks, when he says, "know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."^a He reminds also the faithful brethren in Christ at Ephesus that they were builded together, as living stones of the holy temple, "for the habitation of God through the Spirit;"^b so that as the Spirit dwelt in the temple at Jerusalem, and afterwards in the temple of the body prepared for the incarnation of the Son of God, so does he now dwell in believers, making their bodies, as the Apostle says, "temples of the Holy Ghost," and, we may add, his only earthly temples. The Apostle to the Hebrews calls believers "the house of Christ," and he exhorts the Corinthians to "examine themselves whether they were in the faith," by the searching consideration, "Know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ *is in you*, ex-

^a 1 Cor. iii. 16.^b Eph. ii. 21.

cept ye be reprobates ;”^c and he says to the Romans, “ ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God *dwell in you*. *Now if any man* have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his.”^d

These are very strong expressions, doubtless, but they are in entire harmony with the words of our text ; and yet they are clearly applicable, not only to an age of special and miraculous agency, but to the present state of every Christian.

If then it is true of every believer in Christ that the Spirit of God dwelleth *in him*, let us, in application of our subject, consider this truth in a practical point of view.

1. As a test of character.

If we are warranted as Christians to expect more than the presence of Christ among us, even the actual dwelling of the Holy Ghost within us, so that we are to become the “temples of God through the Spirit,” it clearly becomes us to inquire *whether the Holy Ghost does thus dwell in us?* On the one hand, we must not be deterred from making such an inquiry by fear of the enthusiasm, strictly so called, to which this doctrine may have given rise ; for it is clear that the words of the text do imply a real intercourse

^c 2 Cor. xii. 15.

^d Romans, viii. 9.

between the Spirit of God and our own minds, which it is reasonable to expect, and therefore it is reasonable to inquire whether it has been received. Nor, on the other hand, should we remain satisfied with a merely intellectual creed, and a form of godliness, but must long after a religion within; the life of God in the soul. We must seek for such a living and acting presence of the Holy Ghost, according to our Lord's most gracious and true promise, as will produce the "fruits of the Spirit in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth."^e We must remember that our Lord said of *Christians*, "If *any* man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."^f There must be something real meant by such words as these, and something distinctive. They must mean such a manifestation of Christ by the Holy Ghost as is not made unto the world, and which marks out those to whom it is made as being not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world.

But this presence, this abiding, this special and distinguishing manifestation, as it is granted to those who obey God under the influence of love, so will it also give evidence of its existence by the conformity of the will, the temper, the affec-

^e Eph. v. 9.

^f John, xiv. 23.

tions, the desires of the mind, the habits of the life—the whole character—to the likeness of Him who takes up his abode in the heart. If then our character, the spirit of our mind, be still carnal, and worldly; if our tempers be unrestrained, the flesh still unsubdued, and the affections bound down to the earth, it is evident, in proportion as this is the case, that the Holy Ghost does not dwell in us, and that we are not led by the Spirit of God. There is, therefore, in such case no witness given to our spirit that we are children of God; and if we be not children, then we are not heirs, but aliens, as yet, from the covenant of promise, without that good hope which faith alone can give, and without God in the world; for the believer in Christ receives not the Spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God.^s Although we may have had the sacramental pledge of all those privileges, yet as circumcision became uncircumcision to the Jew who kept not the law, so to the worldly and carnal Christian, his baptism becomes of none effect, yea, rather it will tend to his greater condemnation, for God will bring him under the bond of the covenant, and by it will he be judged.

2. *A standard of attainment.*—If then we may

^s 1 Cor. ii. 12.

test our character by the expectation we are warranted to form of the indwelling of God's Spirit in our hearts, if we be faithful, we may use the same doctrine, further, as a *standard of attainment*. And what an exalted standard is thus presented to us! The Apostle, who declared that in his flesh dwelt no good thing, that he could do nothing by his own natural powers, because by nature he was spiritually dead, says nevertheless that he can "do all things through Christ strengthening him," and that Christ liveth in him.

Therefore we must be careful not to think that we have attained, and sit down contented with such a low standard of holy living, and holy dying—that daily death—as passes current in the world; but forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, we must press toward the mark of the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.^h We are taught by the communion service of our Church that if we "spiritually eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood," not only in the celebration of that blessed sacrament, but in the daily habit of our lives, "we dwell in Christ, and Christ in us, we are one with Christ, and Christ with us." So also St. Paul tells the "Saints and

^h Phil. iii. 13, 14.

faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse," that they ought to "set their affections on things above and not on things on the earth, because they were dead to the world, and their life was hid with Christ in God."ⁱ What a heavenly life is that to lead! how full of peace, and joy, and blessedness! and surely, with such a passage as the text before our minds—warranted to believe that the Holy Ghost shall be in us as a well of water springing up unto eternal life—we ought not to be satisfied to "walk as men," according to the course of this present evil world.

In fact, the standard of attainment which a simple minded reader would gather from the word of God, is so exalted a one, that it has often made people think a godly life something "high above out of their reach," quite incompatible with the discharge of the common duties of this world, and even with the ordinary intercourse of mankind. Hence have arisen two opposite forms of error with minds of peculiar temperament. Some vigorous and active characters, eagerly bent on the pursuit of this world's business, have put religion on one side because they felt its demands, if yielded to, to be so absorbing that they must needs go out of the world to satisfy them; and therefore that Christianity might be suited to the

ⁱ Col. iii. 2, 3.

scholar, or the recluse, the unoccupied or the infirm; but that it was impracticable to be at once "fervent in spirit," and yet "not slothful in business."

Others of a contemplative turn of mind, and perhaps less vigorous constitution, have retired from the world, dwelt in "dens and caves of the earth," harassed their flesh by voluntary mortifications, and practised a sort of physical piety; acknowledging thereby the justice of the very conclusion to which the most worldly arrive, namely, that religion is not consistent with an active interest in the affairs of this rough world.

We should indeed be in an evil case if these conclusions were correct; for in that case Christianity would be of no use to those who most needed it, and we must go out of the world if we wish to win heaven, and leave this world's affairs to be managed by those who were for this very reason the least fitted for the task, because their whole soul was devoted exclusively to them, and they had no views beyond the grave. It was however no part of our Lord's prayer for his people that they should be taken out of the world, but that they should be kept from its evil—living in it, and yet not of it—walking on the earth, and yet having their conversation in heaven—living as the men of another world, the citizens

of a glorious and holy city towards which their desires are constantly directed, and for which they are daily becoming more meet.

3. *An encouragement to exertion.*—But if the worldly and the ascetic are alike wrong in the conclusion which they derive from the exalted standard of attainment which the doctrine of our text exhibits, that it is something which they cannot hope to reach who are engaged in the affairs of life, and exposed to its temptations, we may also regard the subject as affording the most ample *encouragement to spiritual exertion.*

If God be for us, who can be against us? If Christ dwells by his Spirit in the hearts of his people, they may descend into the arena of life, and fight there, day by day, an unceasing and unwearied battle, sore let and hindered, often baffled, often discouraged, sometimes afraid, faint yet pursuing, and still advancing onwards to final and certain victory. Such is the Christian's life and conflict, and such its blessed issue. Not peculiar to this or that man, but common to all of every age, and station, and national character. No man is exempt from the struggle with the evil one, and therefore we should not think it strange when we are exposed to some fiery trial, and so be discouraged and cast down, as though some strange thing had happened unto us: but

we should remember at the same time, for our encouragement, that no believer in Christ is excluded from the benefit of his Saviour's triumph, when he ascended up on high that he might send down the Spirit to dwell in the hearts of his people, that they might be strengthened with all might by his Spirit in their inner man.^k Therefore we may work without discouragement, and fight without fear, and pray with all boldness, being assured that our Heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to those that ask him; and that if He dwells in us, we shall have a present help in every needful time of trouble and danger.

4. Finally we may observe that as all our comfort, and all our strength, are derived from the presence of the Holy Ghost among us, so may every evil under which the Church or individuals, labour, be traced to his absence. It is the remark of a great man that "when the religion professed is decayed and full of scandal, we may expect the rising up of new sects;"¹ and certainly a considerable portion of the sects which have in all ages disturbed the peace of the Church, and weakened its power, may be distinctly shewn to have been derived from dissatisfaction with the religion of professed Christians, and a craving after something deeper, and better. These aspi-

^k 1 Peter iv. 12.

¹ Bacon, Essay on Religion.

rations were, no doubt, often unreasonable, and proceeded from that vain expectation of finding perfection here on earth, and setting up a human model, which has led astray so many noble minds, and made them restless, and exposed to the influence of every wind of doctrine: but it is impossible for any thoughtful student of Church history not to feel that the languor, and even unsoundness of the general condition of the Church, in some particular periods and countries, was such as ought not to have satisfied any earnest mind.

Thus, doubtless, has it been with ourselves. The frigid theology, the decent formalism, the negative piety, of the last century, was what could not satisfy any one who thought seriously upon so absorbing a subject as the well being and the eternal prospects of his own soul, and consequently of the souls of others. Such a state of things was philosophically false, as well as theologically wrong. There was evidently more reason in the self immolating fanaticism of a Hindoo Fakir; more truth in the wild enthusiasm of a Mahometan Dervish, and more piety in the ascetic and unprofitable abstraction of an anchorite. It is, however, easier to discover error than to find out truth; and so men, startled out of their dreaming satisfaction with a

form of godliness without power, a Christianity without the cross, orthodoxy without life, rushed different ways in search of truth and reality, but in too many instances discovered only an opposite form of error, each one fixing upon that which was most congenial with his own temperament, physical or intellectual, and therefore most injurious to him. What we all want to turn us away from such deluding phantoms is the realization of the blessed promise of the text; for when the very Spirit of the Father and of the Son dwells in us richly, inspiring the life of love, we shall indeed be studious to provoke one another, but it will be to love, and to good works; and our hearts will be so occupied by high and holy things, that we shall have little time, and less inclination, for minute disputations; we shall learn how much more blessed it is to be the honoured instruments of turning many to righteousness, or even of reclaiming one stray sheep to the fold of Christ, than to have silenced a thousand adversaries in the unhappy conflicts which rend and distract the Church. In proportion as the Spirit dwells in us, our contest will be who shall with most meek and thankful patience bear the hallowed burthen of his Redeemer's cross, and best exhibit the mind which was in Christ Jesus. When people see

Christianity presented before them in this real and attractive form, they will not turn back to the gloomy mysticism, the wild worship, and the sensuous fiction, of a corrupt Church. They will not attempt to purchase God's favour by laborious and painful acts of penance, for their whole life will be one continuous act of penitential gratitude: nor will they seek access to God through the mediation of the Virgin Mother, or the innumerable fellowship of angels, for they will find free and immediate access to the Father by that one Spirit who dwells in them, and takes of the things that are Christ's, even his accomplished salvation, and reveals all to the believer as his own right and purchased possession. What we all want is more of God's Spirit dwelling in our hearts, and what the Church wants, to heal its many wounds, is not more logic, but more grace—less disputation, and more love—rest, rather than medicine. Our feverish excitement about circumstantials will subside, as our interest in what is essential increases; and so all these joints will fall into their proper places, and assume their due relative proportions. Then will our religion be no longer a dead speculation, but a living law; it will be matter not of restraint, but of privilege; not of disputation, but of practice; not of fear, but of love. Knowing the

Son by the Spirit's teaching, he will set us free from the bondage of the world, and the flesh, and the devil ; and we shall go forward in our way towards heaven, that is, towards holiness, rejoicing in the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Let us then leave off contention, and open our hearts to welcome the Spirit of love ; and may the God of peace and love be with us !





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